

"The Spirit God has given us is no cowardly spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise. (2Timothy)

St. Paul's origins date back to mid-1900s

On Pentecost Sunday, June 1, 1952, more than 200 people attended the first Mass at the newly organized Catholic mission church of St. Paul the Apostle in downtown Ithaca. Father Paul E. Foster greeted everyone as the 9 a.m. Sunday morning service began. The Catholic Church of St. Paul the Apostle became a reality.

That first Mass was offered in a vacated auto dealership building on Pine River Street. Prior to that time, Catholics in the area traveled to Alma, St. Louis or Bannister. But, now they had their own parish...albeit without a proper church building.

It didn't take long, however, for the young parish to raise funds to build a church. In September of 1952, Father Charles L. Ganley replaced Father Foster and a year later in May of 1953 ground was broken for a new colonial-style church to be built on the corner of Emerson and Union streets.

On Sunday, Nov. 8, 1953, Father Ganley sang the first Latin High Mass in the almost-completed



Outside of Colonial-style church, 1954



Inside of Colonial-style church, 1954

church, preceded by a blessing of the interior. However, formal dedication ceremonies were held June 29, 1954. Bishop Woznicki celebrated the Mass, speaking in both English and Polish.

It was a glorious day for all those who had worked so hard to see that a proper church was built in Ithaca. The church featured 10 stained-glass windows, a choir loft, and a basement meeting hall.

It was in 1964 that new liturgical rules were implemented governing the Mass being celebrated in English versus Latin, having the congregation and not just the choir participate during Mass, having other musical instruments besides the organ played during Mass, and new rules for fasting and abstinence. These changes evolved out of the Second Vatican Council and were implemented world-wide throughout all Catholic churches.

In the 1960s the small Ithaca parish grew--grew so much that it outgrew its new building. It also needed religious education classrooms and a parish hall. Occasional downpours tended to flood the basement which was used as a community hall for the church. Functions scheduled for the basement often had to be postponed or crews with mops and buckets had to swiftly clean up the water before the functions could be held.

On Sept. 14, 1969, the present church was dedicated by Most Rev. Bishop Francis F. Reh, the then newly installed Bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw. The church features hand-made Facet Glass windows above the altar, hand-crafted by a Midland artist and donated by the Dionise family.

"Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavens! (Ephesians)

Other "firsts" for the church include:

Nov. 8, 1960: first Saturday evening Mass

November of 1973: the first bingo games in the former hall. (Bingo ended in 1981.)

1977: Catholics begin receiving Communion in the hand.

1978: First Lay Ministers of the Eucharist appointed: Theresa Lewanski, Robert Morris, Roger Pamment and John Raducha.

1979: First guitar mass.

May 8, 1983: Groundbreaking ceremonies were held for a church activity center to be attached to the church.

July 26, 1983: Father Max J. Frego was appointed pastor of St. Paul's and Father John Hoogterp took over St. Cyril's Parish in Bannister.

May 20, 1984: An open house was held for the new education/activity center. Cost of the new building was \$240,000.

1982: A special Mass in honor of marriage and the family was held. Many couples made Marriage Encounter weekends during the 1970s and 1980s.

1983: RENEW program featuring fellowship and Bible study began.

Oct. 15, 1984: 37 charter members of the St. Paul's chapter of the Knights of Columbus formed.

1985: Former colonial-style church building was removed from the church property.

1986: The Great Flood poored 24 inches of rain down on Ithaca within a 30-day period. The rectory had about four feet of water floating in the lower level. Many church records as well as many of Father Frego's personal articles were lost.



The former church rectory was located on the corner of Union and Center streets.



Inside of church with gold carpeting.

1990: Companions on the Journey" program begins.

August 16, 1992: Father Harry Sikorski is formally installed.

1993: Female altar serves are introduced as well as receiving Communion from the cup.

January, 1994: Father Harry resigns and returns to Brazil. Father Ed Nemeth fills in until father John A. Ederer was installed on Aug. 7 by Bishop Kenneth Untener.

January of 1997: The memorial monument of the "Unborn Child" is donated by the Knights of Columbus.

1997: Steve and Carla Smith donated their house located just west of the church to serve as a new church rectory.

2000: Father Julius Spleet and Sister Phyllis Ohren (the parish's first Pastoral Administrator) are assigned to St. Paul's. Tragically, she died in an auto accident in June of 2000.

September-November 2000: Sister Virginia Schally took over duties as interim Pastoral Administrator.

June 15, 2001: Sister Margo Tafoya is appointed Pastoral Administrator and the parish feels fortunate to have a stationary leader again.

Parish priests to date:

Fr. Paul Foster

Fr. Charles Ganley: May of 1957 to June of 1966

Fr. Donald Eppenbrock: June of 1966 to July of 1970

Fr. Joseph Friske: October of 1970 to January of 1976

Fr. John Hoogterp: March of 1965 to July of 1983

Fr. Max Frego: July of 1983 to July of 1992

Fr. Harry Sikorski: June of 1992 to June of 1994

Fr. John Ederer: August of 1994 to October of 1998

Fr. Julius Spleet: Present priest