

The
Ongoing History
of
SS. Peter and Paul Parish

1995: Our most recent history as compiled by parishioners.

There are, indeed, many different members, but one body.
1 Corinthians 12:20
(From the Mission Statement)

Mission Statement
SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church

We are Catholic Christians
called by God to community,
to grow in faith, hope, and love,
and as disciples, to advance the reign of God
here in our midst.

``Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in
their midst.'' (Matthew 18:20)

We gather together to worship

* celebrating God's Word and the Sacraments with and
for each other.

* welcoming new members through evangelization and the
Rite of Christian Initiation.

* seeking to live as a Eucharistic people -- taken,
blessed, broken, and shared.

We gather together to learn

* sharing our values, traditions, and beliefs.

* challenging each other to grow.

* seeking to change our hearts and our lives in true
conversion.

We gather together to serve

* supporting each other and actively participating on
all of life's fronts.

* standing with and for the poor.

* seeking to be good stewards of our resources -- our
gifts, talents, facilities, and finances.

We seek to grow closer to God
and to each other, and to this vision
of what God calls us to be.

``There are, indeed, many different members, but one body.''

1 Corinthians 12:20

**A Brief Look
at the History of
SS. Peter and Paul**

The cornerstone for SS. Peter and Paul was laid in 1866 on Danville's East Main Street.

However, this was not the first Catholic church in Danville. That church, which was located on what is now North Fifth Street, was dedicated by the first Catholic priest ordained in America, Father Stephan Theodore Badin.

Called St. Patrick's, the church was dedicated on March 17, 1810, giving Danville Catholics a church home. At that time, North Fifth was known as Chapel Street.

Badin had been ministering to Danville Catholics at least since 1798, just six years after Kentucky became a state. Work on St. Patrick's began in 1807, according to Calvin Fackler's "Early Days in Danville."

St. Patrick's was the first brick church begun in the state and remains the oldest Catholic church building standing in Kentucky.

Now an apartment house, old St. Patrick's has also served as a Presbyterian manse and the home of a Centre College professor.

Early financial support for St. Patrick's came from its only well-to-do parishioner, Daniel McIlvoy. The financial stability of the church depended on the financial stability of Mr. McIlvoy, who was the best known of the church's first 10 members. His business declined and the church became inactive because of lack of financial support.

It is believed that even during the merchant's more prosperous days, it was very difficult for him to maintain the church, virtually by himself.

The exact date of the abandonment of St. Patrick is not known. The church is not listed among the Catholic

churches at the Jubilee celebration of the diocese in 1825.

However, the town was not abandoned by the diocese. A letter written in 1826 by Bishop Flaget of Bardstown indicates his deep concern over lack of priests to serve Danville and several other towns.

In 1827, the Rev. George Elder was assigned to St. Pius Church in Scott County with instructions to "visit Danville and Harrodsburg occasionally on his missionary journeys."

Records show that six people were confirmed in the church in 1828.

St. Patrick's eventually was sold for \$300 in 1835. When Mr. McIlvoy declared bankruptcy in 1833, creditors overlooked the church, thinking it belonged to the Catholics. When it was found that the Catholics held no deed, the property was sold to Stephen S. Barnett.

In 1842, Boyle County was created out of Lincoln and Mercer counties, but nearly 30 years would pass before Catholics would again have their own church.

Previously written church histories indicate that Father Ivo Schacht, known as the "builder of churches," dedicated SS. Peter and Paul in 1868, the same year construction was started. Father Schacht served Danville from Lebanon.

However, a November 1871 article in The Kentucky Advocate gives a lengthy account of the dedication of the church by the Right Rev. William McClosky, bishop of the Diocese of Kentucky. According to the article, construction took four years as parishioners raised money to complete the work.

The church was built on the site of Gill's Tavern. When conventions were held in Danville in the late-1700s to work out the constitution needed for the state to be formed, the tavern served as a place for rest and refreshment after delegates had completed the heated debates for that day.

In 1869, SS. Peter and Paul was assigned its first resident pastor, Father H. L. Brady. His parish stretched 100 miles -- from Frankfort to Tennessee.

Church fairs soon were part of church life. The Record described one held in April 1882. Prizes won on that occasion included a cooking stove, shotgun, marble-top dressing case, silver pitcher, china, a ton of coal, a Berkshire hog, a barrel of flour and a harness.

SS. Peter and Paul was served by pastors from different religious orders until 1952, when the Louisville Archdiocese again took charge of the parish.

Dominican fathers from St. Rose Priory near Springfield served the church from 1830 until 1868. During this time, Mass was held in the courthouse and in private homes.

In 1908, Benedictine fathers from St. Bernard Abbey of St. Bernard, Ala., took charge of the parish. They served until 1952.

As the number of Catholics in the area increased, SS. Peter and Paul did not remain the only Catholic church for long.

In 1885, the Rev. Paul Joseph Volk oversaw the building of St. Patrick's in Junction City.

Until 1905, priests from SS. Peter and Paul served the church. It was not until Sept. 3, 1989, that the Junction City church was again served by SS. Peter and Paul priests.

From 1905 until 1965, St. Patrick's was served by Benedictine monks from Cullman, Ala. When the care of the church went back to the Louisville Archdiocese, priests from Stanford served the church.

St. Patrick still maintains the St. Francis of Assisi cemetery located in the New Austria-Catholic Knob section of Boyle County. In the late 1880's, St. Francis served that area. The building also housed living quarters for the priest.

In the early 1930s, St. Francis was dismantled. Its altars were transferred to St. Patrick for use there.

Benedictine father Stephen Radtke guided the parish during the 1949 opening of a Catholic school, which served the Danville area until 1971.

In 1969, Father William Brennan established a mission church in Perryville. Known as St. Mary's, the mission was transferred to Harrodsburg at the time St. Patrick's was transferred to SS. Peter and Paul in 1989.

The parish has produced two fine priests, the Right Rev. Monsignor Francis J. Timoney, who was ordained in 1915, and the Rev. Richard Sullivan, who was ordained in 1977.

Sisters from the parish include Sisters Gertrude Marie Feistritz, Ann Mary Tamme, Mary Elizabeth Burka, Leorita Burka, Betty Ann May, Josephine Foley and Judy Morris.

Important Dates in the Life
of SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church

- 1798 -- Catholic services held in
Danville
- 1810 -- Dedication of first Catholic
church in Danville, March 17
- 1824 -- Danville back to mission status
- 1830 -- Dominican fathers from St. Rose
Priory assigned to Danville
- 1842 -- Boyle County formed
- 1866 -- Cornerstone laid for SS. Peter and Paul
- 1869 -- First resident pastor assigned
- 1871 -- SS. Peter and Paul dedicated
- 1885 -- St. Patrick built in Junction City
- 1880s -- St. Francis built on Catholic Knob
- 1905 -- St. Patrick assigned to
Benedictine monks
- 1908 -- SS. Peter and Paul assigned to
Benedictine fathers;
Altar Society established by 1922
- 1930s -- St. Francis torn down and altars
transferred to St. Patrick
- 1949 -- Catholic school opened
- 1952 -- Louisville Archdiocese assigning
priests to Danville
- 1962 -- Vatican II begins
- 1965 -- Vatican II ends;
St. Patrick assigned to
Louisville Archdiocese;
Earliest record of church bulletin

- 1968 -- Parish Council started
- 1969 -- St. Mary in Perryville started
- 1971 -- Catholic school closed, religious
education classes started by volunteers
Knights of Columbus chapter formed
- 1974 -- Amen Corner started
- 1977 -- Catholic Center dedicated
on April 17
- 1980 -- Paul Arnold ordained as permanent deacon
- 1982 -- Church celebrates 175th anniversary
- 1983 -- Melvin Young ordained as
permanent deacon
- 1984 -- Church receives bequest from Myrdal estate
- 1988 -- Danville becomes part of newly formed Catholic
Diocese of Lexington on March 2;
Dedication of renovated, expanded
SS. Peter and Paul on July 2
- 1989 -- St. Patrick assigned to SS. Peter and Paul;
St. Mary transferred to St. Andrew, Harrodsburg

Priests who have Served
SS. Peter and Paul

Pastors

1868 - 1872 -- Father H.L. Brady
1872 - 1876 -- Father E. Breen
1876 - 1878 -- Father M.W. Whelan
1878 - 1893 -- Father A.J. Brady
1893 - 1895 -- Father Paul J. Volk
1895 - 1897 -- Father C. Thomas
1897 - 1902 -- Father William D. Pike
1902 - 1908 -- Father John Knue
1908 - 1922 -- Father Osmund Wiesneth, OSB
1922 - 1936 -- Father Sebastian Seimer, OSB
1936 - 1943 -- Father Placidus Becker, OSB
1943 - 1952 -- Father Stephen Radtke, OSB
1952 - 1968 -- Father Vincent Osborne
1968 - 1979 -- Father William Brennan
1979 - 1993 -- Father William Spalding
1993 - 1995 -- Monsignor John J. Rolf

Associate pastors since 1952

1952 - 1955 -- Father Benjamin O'Connor
1955 - 1957 -- Father Borgia McCauley
1957 - 1961 -- Father Donald Fisher
1961 - 1965 -- Father James Malloy
1965 - 1969 -- Father Vincent Grenough
1969 - 1971 -- Father Stanley Osborne
1971 - 1972 -- No associate
1972 - 1977 -- Father B.J. Breen
1977 - 1981 -- Father James Graf
1981 - 1983 -- Father Joseph Vest
1983 - 1986 -- Father Charles Walker
1986 - 1987 -- Father Patrick Dolan
1987 - 1993 -- Father Matthew Farmer
1993 - 1994 -- Father Barry Burrus
1994 - 1995 -- No associate

1979 to 1993
Father William Spalding, pastor

The expansion of the church and the development of the educational programs were two major focuses while Father William Spalding served SS. Peter and Paul as pastor.

During this same period, SS. Peter and Paul was moved from the Archdiocese of Louisville to the newly formed Catholic Diocese of Lexington effective March 2, 1988.

Expansion and renovation of the church was made possible by an unexpected gift to the parish. At the April 25, 1984, Parish Council meeting Father Spalding announced that the church had been bequeathed 6,700 shares of stock in the Farmers Capital Bank Corp. in Frankfort.

The bequest from Margaret Myrdal came to the church because she had attended SS. Peter and Paul during summers spent at Herrington Lake.

That bequest, which eventually amounted to \$785,000 provided the base of financial support that made it possible to renovate the church.

The completion of the remodeling in 1988 meant there were no longer "church" members of SS. Peter and Paul and "Catholic Center" members. Members had tended to favor one location over another for Mass.

The expansion also ended the weekly trek of the missals on their cart from the church to the Catholic Center and back to the church.

There was no doubt that the church, which held less than 200 people, had to be enlarged. One Easter members stood outside and looked in the windows because the little church was so crowded. By 1993, there were over 500 families in the parish.

Enlarging the original building also had another advantage. Having space in the church for nearly 600 people meant more members could join together at one time for important celebrations, such as Midnight Mass.

In addition to the Myrdal inheritance, money for construction came from members who pledged \$350,000 during a fund drive started in December 1988.

Making and carrying out plans for the church improvements occupied meetings of the Parish Council for many months. Sprinkled throughout the council minutes are the formation of and reports from the various committees needed to see the building project through to completion. ``Ad hoc'' committees abounded as the sense of church members was taken, as an architect was hired and as the actual construction started.

The planning was not without disagreement. Differences arose over whether the existing church should be expanded, whether it should be torn down and replaced or whether the church should move to a new site.

The Parish Council members struggled with their own thoughts as they discussed the best way to spend the money. Prayer guided the church throughout the process and agreement was finally reached.

An unfinished dream from the days of planning is the renovation of the Catholic Center, which serves as the center for educational programs offered by the church. Original hopes were that enough money would be available to expand the church and renovate the Catholic Center.

The past 14 years have seen many changes in the programs available to parishioners to guide their spiritual growth.

The need for space to have these programs has been the concern behind calls for renovating the Catholic Center.

When Father Spalding arrived, an educational program with offerings for all ages was being developed through the efforts of Sister Mary Otho Ballard, who became director of religious education in 1977.

Father Spalding took a major step to ensure the success of these Sunday morning programs by eliminating the middle Mass in September 1980. This meant there was no conflict about whether to go to the 9:30 a.m. Mass or educational classes.

In 1982, church members took part in Renewal, an intense weekend of spiritual development that deepened one's appreciation for the Catholic faith. Another benefit was that it brought together those who attended different Masses and helped unite the membership.

Renew, a program that took place over 2 1/2 years, started in 1986. During six-week sessions, members met together to share faith experiences as a way to draw the parish closer to the Lord.

The program was popular. During the second session that started in February 1987, 218 people were involved in the small groups that met in members' homes to discuss such issues as Peace and Justice, Scripture and Evangelization.

The success of the program is evident today since several of those groups continue to meet on a regular basis.

The program to bring adults into the church, Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, became a regular part of church education in 1982.

After Sister Mary Otho left, the direction of the educational programs has been under the leadership of several competent leaders: Corrine McCann Powers, Otto Piechowski, Nancy Altman, Sister Diane Kozlowski, and Dean and Linda Manternach.

In addition to the special programs, the church has had the standard First Communion, Reconciliation and Confirmation classes for its youth. In 1992, special Wednesday afternoon programs were started for children in first through sixth grades.

Outreach to the community at large also increased between 1979 and 1993.

Already in place was the Amen Corner started in 1974 to raise money for the celebration of Father William Brennan's 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

Ministry to deaf Catholics has been part of SS. Peter and Paul's history for some time. An active program for youth at Kentucky School for the Deaf was in place,

but had to be revised when the students started going home each weekend. Now educational classes are held on Sunday evenings when the students return to the school.

Father Charles Dittmeir, who ministered to the deaf community for many years, left in 1983 to become a missionary.

The gift of the Myrdal inheritance even had an impact on the church's outreach program. After much discussion over many meetings, the Parish Council decided to donate \$40,000 to groups outside the church.

During Advent 1984, church members took part in the first of "Giving Trees." This activity has become a regular part of our Christmas observance and most of the work is done by youth groups of the church. Paper ornaments listing needs of local families are hung on the Christmas tree. Parishioners take an ornament, buy the presents and place them under the tree.

Concern for those in need led to other programs. In 1982, the church started collecting food each Sunday for the Salvation Army's Food Pantry. For a short period of time in 1984, a soup kitchen was opened, but closed because so few people took advantage.

Other Outreach programs over the past 14 years include SAMS for senior citizens which includes a monthly luncheon, a newsletter for college students, a support group for the divorced or separated, continued sponsorship of Boy Scout Troop 119, a support group for single parents, a Mothers Morning for stay-at-home moms, and Masses at Centre College, Northpoint Training Center and the Veterans Administration nursing home in Wilmore.

The Thomas J. Malloy Council of the Knights of Columbus has been active since 1971. In 1990, a member of the council, Robert Hood was elected State Deputy.

The Ladies Guild is another group that has provided service to the parish for many years.

Parish members participated in discussions on the pastoral letter on Social Teachings and the U.S. Economy. Women members told about their concerns during discussions held in the Diocese as plans were being made for the Bishops' pastoral letter on women's issues.

During the Desert Storm crisis, when several church members were sent to Saudia Arabia, the third and fourth grade children wrote letters of support to the soldiers.

Festive occasions have not been lacking in the parish. The most formal occasion was the dedication of the renovated church on July 2, 1988, when members with the help of staff from the new Diocese developed a very moving liturgy.

In 1982, the church celebrated its 175th anniversary with 350 people in attendance for a service to which all former pastors and associates were invited. Archbishop Thomas Kelly presided over the Mass.

The afternoon was turned over to a pot luck dinner and games on the lawn.

Pot lucks have played an important part in the social life of the church. Sunday morning teachers have been treated to pot lucks where others bring the food. In 1987, the parish held a pot luck to welcome Father Matthew Farmer as the new associate pastor.

The members have held a surprise birthday party for Father Spalding; however, the greatest surprise for him was whenever cleaning days touched his study.

Parish Council members thought they were on the cutting edge of technology when they voted in 1983 to purchase a VCR and television for use in the education program. A Parish Council member remembers finding it hard to believe when told that a VCR would soon be commonplace in many homes.

Throughout all the changes at SS. Peter and Paul, one event has been a part of parish life from at least the late-1800s -- The ice cream social.

Activities during the ice cream social have changed to match the times. No longer a white-glove affair, the social is now a family event complete with games for the children. One constant has remained -- ice cream and homemade cakes.

There's also another constant at SS. Peter and Paul's. Construction plans continue. Parish Council meetings in 1993 are concerned with the need to renovate the Catholic Center.

1993-1995
• Monsignor John J. Rolf, pastor

With the change of pastors from Father Spalding and Monsignor Rolf, the parish started a new ritual. The lectionary; sacramental oil, wine and bread; and keys to the church were accepted from the outgoing pastor and presented by the parish back to the incoming pastor.

SS. Peter and Paul also embarked on a very active time as a parish.

On the recommendation of the Service Committee, the church decided to participate in Habitat for Humanity. In the summer of 1994, the Thornton house, which was co-sponsored with The Presbyterian Church of Danville, was dedicated.

In February 1994, the parish hosted the diocesan Sexual Awareness Seminar. In the fall of 1994, members of the parish served as host families for foreign representatives attending a Fourth World conference sponsored by the United Nations.

Discussions about renovating the Catholic Center continued at Parish Council meetings. Plans to hire an architect were put on hold when contributions fell behind and money wasn't available to do the work.

In October 1993, Liturgical Publications took over printing of the bulletin, selling advertisements on the back to pay publishing costs.

Staff changes during these two years were the hiring of Sister Noella Poinsette as director of music ministry, the transfer of Father Barry Burrus from the parish and the hiring of Cathy Lavendar as pastoral associate.

Ministry to prisoners at Northpoint Training Center continues and the church was awarded the Diocesan Mission Award for its efforts.

In January 1995 Father John announced he had requested a transfer, and in May Cathy decided not to renew her contract with the parish.

During the first of the year, the parish held several sharing sessions to affirm the good things happening in the parish and to identify concerns. At about the same time, the Parish Council decided on a mission statement and it was accepted at masses on May 13 and 14.

While all these changes and goal setting were taking place, the church continued its day-to-day activities.

There were 36 baptisms, six welcomed to the church through Rite of Christian Initiation, 11 marriages, 42 first communicants, 36 confirmations and 20 deaths.

A total of 258 youth participated in religious education, held on Sunday mornings. Three adult programs attracted 115 participants.

As of May 23, 1995, there were 529 families, with a total of 1,435 individuals, registered in the parish; 147 families were participating in religious education.

This brief history of SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church was initially prepared when Fathers William Spalding and Matthew Farmer left the church. It has been added to now that Monsignor John J. Rolf is leaving with the hopes that the history will be updated when the term of each pastor ends.

As the committee began to discuss the church's history in 1993, we came to the conclusion that it would be good for the church to have a more detailed history prepared at some future time. The information in this history is a ``barebones'' account of some of the church's activities.

We encourage anyone who thinks information was omitted, left incomplete or is incorrect to contact a member of the committee.

It also needs to be noted that Parish Council minutes contain a more complete record of the activities of the church, including names of people who have worked on various church projects.

Church History Committee

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