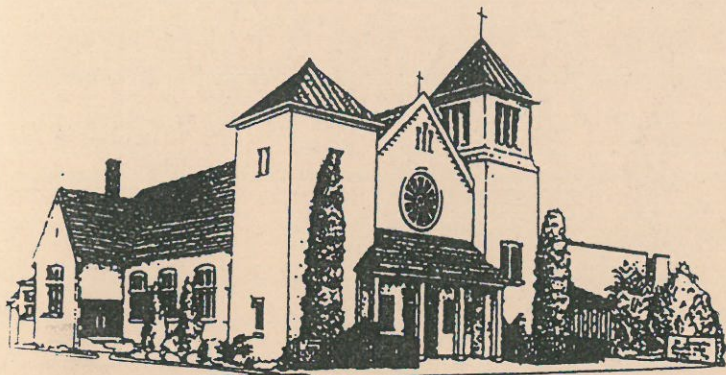


ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH



The first masses held in Langley were held in the home of Joseph and Georgina Michaud, Pioneers of the Langley community.

As the Langley congregation grew, so did the buildings it occupied. A schoolhouse served as an early church. The schoolhouse still stands on Fraser Highway as the Mad Dog's Ski and Sport Shop. It remained the meeting place of Langley Catholics until 1925 when the first St. Joseph's church was completed.

The little wooden church seated about 150 people, which was more than enough room for the twenty families that were registered in the parish.

St. Joseph's provided much of the social life of Catholic families in the 1929's and 30's. The parish organized theatre nights, card tournaments, dances and live music, bazaars and teas and balls.

St. Joseph's has had eight priests since its foundation. The first was Father Tevlin, though not much is known about him because he was only in Langley for a short time. Father Bernard Corcoran came in 1927. A short, energetic Irish priest, Father was a great speaker. Once however during his homily, he spoke so strongly that his false teeth fell out! Though he quickly replaced them without batting an eye, a pair of girls in the front pew were left giggling for the rest of the Mass.

Father Corcoran was transferred to Chilliwack in 1939 and Father Michael Kennedy became pastor. Father Kennedy would remain in Langley for twenty-five years, the longest any priest has been here. On March 10 1943 tragedy struck St. Joseph's Parish. Father Kennedy returned from saying

Mass at White Rock to find the church on fire. The cause of the fire remains a mystery... a candle left burning, a dangerous heating system? To rebuild it would be a difficult task under any circumstances but especially in 1943 as this was during the Second World War. Many goods, including building materials, were rationed to support the war effort. Father Kennedy and his parishioners, however set to work right away and on Easter Sunday 1945 celebrated the first Mass in the newly completed St. Joseph's Church ...the one you go to each week.

Father Kennedy was especially popular with the children of St. Joseph's. While the new church was being built, catechism classes had to be held in a local theatre on Saturday afternoons from 1:00 - 2:00 pm. Father often let students out of class five minutes early so they could purchase a 5 cent ticket to see the 2:00 pm matinee.

Father Kennedy retired in 1965, after serving the priesthood for 38 years. Father Patrick McEvoy became St. Joseph's fourth pastor. "Father Mac" did not stay long however because of bad health. He is remembered as an understanding person who was particularly concerned about the sick. Father McEvoy was followed by Father Francis Nash, who remained pastor for ten years. During his stay,

St. Joseph's celebrated the first ordination of one of its own parishioners, George Dumais.

In June 1976, Father Leon Kotsko was appointed pastor of St. Joseph's. Father Kotsko was a bundle of energy. An avid carpenter, he built the present crying rooms of the church by himself. He often hung out in the church kitchen, always ready to give a hand with the dishes or teach CWL members how to make cabbage rolls!

Father Kotsko was transferred in 1980 and Father Jim Comey became St. Joseph's seventh pastor, a kind man who loved to make people happy. Father Jim was a very hard worker and during the building of St. Catherine's school, could often be seen in jeans and a plaid shirt, hauling dirt and nailing beams.

When he left, in 1992, the parish threw a big party in his honour and presented him with a yellow, fibreglass kayak and survival vest.

In 1992 Father Joe Ponti was appointed pastor. His mandate is to build our new 1000 seat church. There are over 2000 families registered in our parish and there is great need for a new church to serve such a large congregation. Father Joe is very community orientated and loves people. He is a strong fan of the Vancouver Canucks, and holds the award for "Italian Canadian Man of the Year" which he received in 1992.

Since 1980 our assistant priests have been Father Terry Bileski, Father Don Larson, Father Damien Cooper, Father John McCarthy and Father Eric McKechnie.

Our parish has truly been blessed by each of our priests. Let us be truly thankful for having celebrated St. Joseph's 70th Anniversary.

A special thanks to Michelle Kuipers for her help with the research of the history of St. Joseph's. Compiled by The Kuczynski Family 1995.