



PARISH PROFILE

Young Sioux City parish provides social, spiritual atmosphere

By **KATIE LEFEBVRE**
Globe staff reporter

As one of the younger parishes in the Diocese of Sioux City, The Church of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Sioux City is still growing.

The parish began with about 300 families in the late 1960s, has steadily grown and now there are about 1,000 families.

"Our growth area is south of here with new construction in the Southern Hills area and also in Sergeant Bluff," said Father Gerald Feierfeil, pastor at Nativity. "We have somewhere around 150 households in Sergeant Bluff. The growth will continue between here and there."

He pointed out that the parish holds more baptisms than funerals and about 15 couples get married in the parish each year.

"It is a relatively young parish," said the pastor. "Our membership is probably younger than many of the parishes in the city."

Ministries

There are many ministries offered to the parishioners. There is a Catholic school, religious education program and youth ministry program for the youth of the parish.

The Men's Club and Ladies Guild are very active groups for the adults.

"They do a lot of social activities. They also offer financial support for things that otherwise wouldn't be within the budget," said Father Feierfeil.

He said they have a strong Sponsor Couple program for people preparing for marriage. An ongoing Scripture class is offered at the Nativity on Tuesday mornings and one evening of the week at Immaculate Conception Parish.

They cooperate with Immaculate Conception to offer baptism preparation, RCIA, seasonal penance services, etc.

"We want to provide a parish that really ministers to all the spiritual needs of the people of the parish, more than just a place where they can fulfill the obligation to go to Mass or to receive the sacraments," said the pastor. "We want it to be a family and as a family we try to acknowledge the many needs that the

family has. Some of them are social, some spiritual and some practical."

Education

The groundbreaking for Mater Dei-Nativity Center (grades 6, 7 and 8) took place in late 1993 with the first classes held in August of 1994. The current enrollment is 114 students and Mary Fischer is the principal.

The school is part of Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools. The kindergarten through fifth-grade students attend Mater Dei-Immaculate Conception Center.

"The parish has always shared a school program with Immaculate Conception," said Father Feierfeil.

Nativity's religious education program has an enrollment of about 350 children. On Wednesday evenings, the kindergarten through fifth graders meet from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. and the sixth through eleventh graders meet from 7 to 8 p.m.

Religious education is also offered on Sunday mornings for kindergarten through ninth graders. About 80 families send their children on Sundays, noted Sue Hrasky, DRE at Nativity.

"We have the most wonderful volunteers that teach the students," she said.

The youth ministry program, To Heavens End Youth Group, has an average of 20 to 50 students who participate. Mary "Sam" Hacker is the youth minister. The group is a combination of Nativity and Immaculate Conception youth.

The group meets every third Sunday for a meeting and one Saturday or Sunday a month to do a service project.

History

On May 3, 1966, Bishop Joseph M. Mueller formed the new parish in the Morningside area of Sioux City which was named The Church of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"In 1965, Bishop Mueller began an interest in expanding into this part of the city that was growing rapidly," said Father Feierfeil.

Father Leo Harpenau was the first pastor. A house at 2721 S. Cecelia Street was purchased and served as a rectory from



Nativity Church, Sioux City

May 1966 to March 1968.

"The parish was originally an offshoot of Immaculate Conception Parish. About 300 families who belonged to Immaculate Conception became the original membership here," said Father Feierfeil.

Beginning July 3, 1966, Sunday Masses were celebrated at the Cinema Theatre. Baptisms, weddings and funerals of Nativity parishioners were held at Immaculate Conception Church until late 1967, when the new Nativity Parish Center was completed.

"For 10 years, they set up chairs on the gym floor, put an altar on the stage and had Mass in that facility," said Father Feierfeil.

Bishop Mueller approved a plan to build a rectory to be located on the south side of Natalia Way across from the parish center. From April 1967 to March 1968, the men of the parish, with some boys and non-Catholic friends, volunteered their time and labor in the construction of the home.

Ground was broken for the construction of a new church on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1977. The first Mass offered in the new Church of the Nativity was March 25, 1978.

Over the years, they have continued to

keep up the maintenance of the church, upgrading it step by step. The last major project was a new parking lot, noted Father Feierfeil.

Currently, there are workmen doing a mason repair and tuck point project.

"We have done things like make our building more handicapped accessible," said the pastor. "We have done cosmetic things over the years like repainting and recarpeting the church."

The priests who have served Nativity Parish include Father Robert Gralapp, Father David Hogan, Msgr. Roger J. Augustine and Msgr. Michael Sernett. Father Feierfeil became pastor of the parish in 1998.

The pastor commented that this is the largest parish he has served at over the years.

"Even though we are 40 years old, it still has that sense of newness to it," said Father Feierfeil. "The pioneer members are still here but we have an awful lot of young families. It is a growth area. This parish is a very alive parish."

He said the parish is a "very good human environment. They are welcoming. They are cooperative. I find them easy to minister to. They are supportive of me and supportive of the mission of the church."

PARISH INFORMATION

Pastor:
Father Gerald Feierfeil

DRE:
Sue Hrasky

Youth Minister:
Mary "Sam" Hacker

Mater Dei Principal:
Mary Fischer

Mass Times:
Saturday – 4:30 p.m.
(Memorial Day through Labor Day – 5 p.m.); Sunday – 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.;
Tues.-Friday – 8 a.m.

Confessions:
Saturday – 3 to 4 p.m.; First Fridays – 7:30 a.m.

Nativity Parish offers education opportunities

By **KATIE LEFEBVRE**
Globe staff reporter

Nativity Parish is committed to education, noted Father Gerald Feierfeil, pastor, especially education of the young parishioners through the Catholic school and religious education program.

"We give an awful lot of time, attention and energy to our young parishioners," said the priest. "Because of the age of our families, our commitment to the young people is especially important."

Religious education

Sue Hrasky, DRE at Nativity, said that not only do they offer sacramental preparation in the religious education program, but they offer Vacation Bible School and activities for Advent, Christmas and Lent.

"I am extremely pleased with the work that our DRE does with the people she works with in things like sacramental preparation," said Father Feierfeil. "She sees that all of them (children) are given the attention they need."

Despite the fact that children are in school all day before they go to CCD, Hrasky noted that the students don't give her any problems and they are so responsive to learning their faith.

Hrasky has been the DRE since August of 1997. She enjoys the priests she works with and the volunteers that teach. She commented that several of the teachers have been teaching since 1997.

"Father Jerry has been so supportive of me and the program," said Hrasky. "Any time we ask him to come over to visit with the kids, he does. He



Ashley Lawler and Haley Lange, Mater Dei eighth graders, work on a project.

has been wonderful."

Catholic school

Many students of the parish also attend the Catholic school, Mater Dei. The Nativity Center, grades 6-8, is a middle school concept, noted Mary Fischer, principal.

There are six core teachers, who teach literature, English, math, science, social studies and religion. The diversified staff includes one teacher who has been there for over 20 years and another who just started this year.

"Mary Fischer is a very effective principal," said Father Feierfeil. "Our faculty is a good, solid faculty."

LiF Team, Living Instruments of Faith, is a group at the middle school that works alongside Julie Tebbe and the middle school teachers in order to perform acts of service and are consid-

ered leaders within the school.

Fischer noted that the students are involved in various service projects. For example, the Nativity Center has formed a relationship with the Boys and Girls Home.

"It is a unique opportunity that we are able to not only teach science and math, but we can infuse Gospel values in those subjects all day, every day," said Fischer. "My biggest hope is that they have respect for themselves and other people."

Youth ministry

To Heavens End Youth Group helps develop the faith of the high school age parishioners. The program has been in existence for 20 years. Mary "Sam" Hacker has been the youth minister for the program for the same amount of time.

"I enjoy working with our young people and helping them develop their faith," she said. "I look upon them as they are our church now. We need them. We need to develop them to step into rolls. It is enjoyable for me to see them doing that after 20 years. I enjoy the fact that I have students whose parents I had when we first started."

The group participates in several different programs. The students are involved in the adopt-a-grandparent program that includes nursing home residents and homebound parishioners. They are working with a program that supports Siouland soldiers that are going overseas.

The students also have youth Masses at the church.

"They need to know that they are accepted in our church as full-fledged members," said Hacker.



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