



PARISH PROFILE

Lively parish brings community together

By **KATIE LEFEBVRE**
Globe staff reporter

SPENCER – Sacred Heart Parish is full of life and there are many things going on, said Father William Schreiber, pastor.

There about 850 families who belong to Sacred Heart, which has been a pretty steady number in recent years.

“Spencer is a pretty dynamic community and it seems to attract people,” said Father Schreiber.

Ministries

There are many programs and ministries available to the parishioners. These include Sacred Heart School, RCIA, Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters, Rosary Makers, Mission Society, funeral dinner committee, baptismal classes, religious education, youth ministry and Hispanic ministry. A group of parishioners meet on Monday mornings for a Bible study to discuss the readings for the next Sunday.

Father Schreiber said that the parish has wonderful music ministry led by a part-time music minister, Marianne Fuchsen.

“She does a phenomenal job of making the liturgies come to life,” said the priest. “People look forward to that.”

On Wednesday evenings, when religious education classes are going on for the children, adult education and Scripture study is available for the adults. Next year the fall semester will focus on church history and during Lent the Psalms will be discussed.

“We are at that age in our parish where there are a lot of younger families,” said Father Schreiber. “If we can offer them programs that they can take advantage of, then their faith becomes more dynamic. Then they become more faith-filled and more participatory in parish life. We have seen that here.”

He mentioned that the Hispanic ministry program is in transition. Sister Joyce Blum, FSPA, will be moving on to a new ministry. This summer a new Hispanic minister will be hired to serve at Sacred Heart and St. Patrick’s in Estherville.

Father Schreiber said that enjoys celebrating the liturgy at Sacred Heart and the many things that go on in the parish.

He has been pastor for almost a year.

Religious education, youth ministry

There are close to 60 elementary students, 70 middle school and about 100 ninth through twelfth graders who attend religious education classes.

“It is a really lively program. The kids want to come and don’t want to miss,” said Father Schreiber.

Gwen Kardell, DRE and youth minister, said the elementary numbers have been decreasing because of more students going to the Catholic school, but the numbers in the older grades have been growing.

Tess Vogts works with the elementary students and Kardell works with the middle and high school students.

The elementary students attend every Wednesday. During the night, each catechist takes their class to the church for prayer.

“Our goal is to get the children comfortable being in the church,” said Kardell. “We do a lot in our church. For our kindergarten through twelfth, our goal is that the students know the doors of the church are always open whenever they are in need or to be thankful.”

The sacramental classes for the second graders preparing for reconciliation and First Communion are combined with the school students.

The high school and middle school nights alternate Wednesdays. On special occasions the two groups are brought together. The high school nights begin with a meal and fellowship. Then they go to their classes and the night ends with evening prayer and more fellowship.

There is a special program for the seniors called Disciple Ways. Throughout the year the students do different projects including painting a mural somewhere in the school and going on a service trip.

“We put a lot of emphasis on our seniors to do a lot of our church things hoping that when they go to college, they are comfortable going into any church and are willing to be involved,” said Kardell.

She is starting her third year as DRE and youth minister but has been part of the religious education program for sev-



Sacred Heart Church, Spencer

eral years.

Kardell said that she doesn’t have a problem finding catechists and they come back from year to year. The catechists are a mix of parents, young adults and educators.

“Our catechists are amazing,” she said. “It is a great place to work. I really love it here. We all work together.”

History

Sacred Heart had its beginnings in 1872 when the first Mass was said in the home of Joe Maurer. Eleven years later, when there were nine families in the area, the first church was built.

The parish will celebrate its 140th anniversary in 2012.

The building was a small, rectangular frame structure. No bell hung in the bell tower until one was donated in 1909 by parishioner Joseph Hoffrichter.

By 1916, the parish had grown, and although the pastor, Father Bernard Hunt, hoped for a school, he knew a new church was needed. The second church was of golden brown brick and measured 96 by 63 feet and could seat 400 people.

A building fund for a new school was established in the 40’s, and with a fundraising campaign, the project began in

May of 1950.

Because the parish grew to 450 families, more space was needed. It was decided in 1960 to move the parish to a new location. Priority was given to the church, convent and rectory with consideration for a school to be built later.

Fourteen acres of land was purchased, another fund drive held, and by the close of 1964, the first three buildings were complete. The church could seat 850 people, was of contemporary design, constructed of gray granite.

The new school was completed by 1969. A glass-enclosed passageway links all buildings.

About five years ago a major campaign took place for additions to the church. A gathering area was added to the front of the church and a parish hall and kitchen were added to the north side.

Parishioners have welcomed and said goodbye to many pastors and assistants over the years. The last assistant, who happened to be Father Schreiber, left in 1984.

“A lay staff has evolved over the years to take over the parish ministries that exist here,” said Father Schreiber.

PARISH INFORMATION

Pastor:
Father William Schreiber

DRE/Youth Minister:
Gwen Kardell

School:
Sacred Heart School

Principal:
Ron Olberding

Mass Times:
Saturday – 5:30 p.m.;
Sunday – 8 and 10 a.m.;
Weekday – 7:20 a.m.;
Spanish –
Second Sunday of the month at 1 p.m.

Confessions:
Saturday – 4:30 p.m.;
Sunday – 7:30 a.m.

Address:
1111 4th Ave. W
Spencer, IA 51301

Catholic school offers service, faith opportunities

By **KATIE LEFEBVRE**
Globe staff reporter

SPENCER – Catholic school education began at Sacred Heart in Spencer in 1950.

Sacred Heart School marked 50 years in 2000 with a big celebration. The current school was completed by 1969.

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual staffed the school for 37 years. The last nun to leave Sacred Heart was Sister Ceciliene Goetz, who retired in 1997. Since then, Sacred Heart has been staffed entirely by lay teachers.

There are nearly 200 students in the pre-kindergarten through sixth grade school. The school had seventh and eighth grade classes until the early 80s. At one point, enrollment was down to 128, so the number of students has definitely increased, noted Ron Olberding, Sacred Heart principal.

The pre-kindergarten began four years ago and a pre-k classroom was built three years ago.

“We have great kids, great families and a very dedicated staff,” said Olberding. He said that most of the faculty and staff have been at Sacred Heart for a while.

Olberding has been at Sacred Heart for almost 20 years. He enjoys the kids, the teachers and the families.

Opportunities

The principal pointed out that the sixth graders have the opportunity to go to the Math Bee and the younger students look forward to this. The Sacred Heart team has been state champion two times.

“If the students like math, it is something they look forward to,” said Olberding.

In the community, a big project that the students are a part of is taking turns decorating the doors at the nursing home in Spencer. The fifth graders go there every two weeks to help the residents play Bingo.

“They develop really good relationships,” said Olberding. “It is good for the residents and the kids. These are the things the kids remember.”

Family atmosphere

Skye Cauthron, a fifth grader in Nancy Geisinger’s class, said her



Karen Conlon listens as her first graders read aloud. (Globe photo by Katie LeFebvre)

favorite class is spelling.

“In fifth grade we get to go to the nursing home and play Bingo with the residents,” she said about something she enjoys at school.

She likes being able to go to Mass on Fridays and is able to serve at Mass. She also serves as a cantor at school Masses. Her teacher, Geisinger, mentioned that Cauthron has a “beautiful voice.”

Shirley Selzer, the teacher librarian, has worked at Sacred Heart for almost 20 years. Her children attended the school.

“I always feel a sense of family in this building,” she said. “We look out for each other.”

Selzer said that she emphasizes respect in the classroom, respect of property, of people, each other and of her. In return she shows respect for them.

Abbi Heying, a first grader in Karen Conlon’s class, said she likes going to the church to light candles with her class.