



PARISH PROFILE

Name Patrick plays significant role in naming of Estherville parish

By **RENEE WEBB**
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ESTHERVILLE – When Father Merlin Schrad was assigned to St. Patrick Parish, he learned the parish located in Emmet County was big into helping others.

“The parishioners of this parish are always willing to pitch in to help others – whether it’s our own people or people in the community who are in need,” he said.

Early history

According to the parish history compiled by parishioner Pat Metzger, Catholics of the area were first ministered to by a priest assigned to northwest Iowa in 1857 and the first church was actually built in Estherville in 1890 under Father Luke Carroll.

Five Catholic families were living in Estherville at the time and each of the heads of these households bore the name Patrick – Patrick Howe, Patrick Sullivan, Patrick Riley, Patrick Bagan and Patrick Murray.

“Because of the coincidence and also because of the great personal devotion of Rev. Carroll to the Irish saint, it was decided to name the Catholic church in Estherville, St. Patrick Catholic Church,” stated the parish history. An Irish priest – Father John Kelly – came to the parish in 1891.

A new church was built and dedicated on Oct. 13, 1907.

It was during tenure of long-time pastor Father J.H. Duhigg, who served from 1949 to 1975, that St. Patrick School was opened in 1952. The priest, who was elevated to a monsignor in 1962, also headed up a new church building project in 1966. In early 1971, because of the inability of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother to continue to staff the school, the decision was made to close. When Msgr. Duhigg retired in 1975, the parish decided to rename the school and social center the Duhigg Center.

Today’s parish

The parish currently has about 350 families and there are about 135 children enrolled in parish religion classes from kindergarten through tenth grade.

“Right now we are in the process of trying to start a youth group after they get confirmed in the tenth grade to encourage students to continue to be involved,” noted Father Schrad, who added he is particularly pleased that two seniors and a junior lead a weekly children’s liturgy. “They did that on their own, so it makes me really proud.”

The example of those youth, he stressed, has served as a great example for other teens to become involved in various ministries.

For adults, St. Patrick’s earlier this year offered two Bible studies. They hope to hold more in the future.

Father Schrad noted they have a strong Hispanic presence

with Father Jeremy Wind from Algona celebrating Mass the first and third Sundays of the month. About 100 to 150 attend the Spanish Mass with a number of the children enrolled in the parish’s religious education program. The parish first offered Spanish Mass on a monthly basis starting in 1992.

Formation in the Hispanic community continues to grow with two young adults and an older adult scheduled to be confirmed when Bishop Walker Nickless leads a confirmation service in the parish later this month.

“Father Jeremy is currently leading a Bible study after his 1:30 p.m. Mass. The Hispanic community really appreciates him,” said Father Schrad, who added the Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration has become a big tradition in the parish.

The parish is also home to traditional men’s and women’s groups such as the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters and a group of women who head up funeral dinners.

Through the years various updates were made to the parish grounds and one of the more recent additions was an addition of the bell tower, which was done in 2003 under Father Jerry Cosgrove. He also led a church remodeling project in 2005.

Under the direction of Father Schrad and the parish’s finance committee, a “Stop The Leaks Fundraiser” was launched in the fall of 2015 for a new roof. Excess funds allowed them to add a digital sign, new handicapped-accessible doors and concrete at the entrance of the church.

St. Patrick’s has been linked with Immaculate Conception Parish of Graettinger for the last six years, but will reconnect with St. Mary Church in Armstrong that they previously were linked with for more than 20 years.

Ecumenical and service-minded

“There is a spirit of ecumenism,” noted Father Schrad, who explained the St. Patrick’s family joins with people from other churches in the community for several projects. “People can see our church in action and it makes Christ present today.”

There are about 18 churches in the community of 6,500.

A great example of the collaboration among churches, he noted, is the community Christmas project that is hosted by St. Patrick’s. The project began in 1982.

“Items are gathered in a number of churches and money from businesses to provide Christmas gifts for the needy of the community. They serve about 800 individuals from about 300 families every year,” Father Schrad said.

He is a member of the Ministerial Association in Estherville, regularly meeting with clergy of various faiths.

“Right now we are working on a project to help feed the families that don’t have enough food. We are going to try to that once



St. Patrick Church, Estherville

a month at the VFW Center,” Father Schrad said. “The churches will take turns to provide the meal and serve the meal. It’s another example of working together as a community to help those in need.”

As a pastor, he said it is very important for his parish to be as welcoming as possible and encourage parishioner involvement in projects and organizations. In his relatively short time in the parish, the priest has witnessed a strong attendance and volunteer participation at the fish dinners.

“We been averaging about 300, with lots of people involved of all ages,” said Father Schrad. “We try to do some new, exciting things as more people step forward to bring life to our parish.”

Along with ecumenical projects, parishioners of St. Patrick’s head up other projects that touch the lives of many – the Respect Life newsletter and Mission Quilting group being two examples. (See sidebar.)

The parish also hosts an annual rummage fundraiser.

“Some of the money raised through the rummage is used for the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Fund, which is used for people that may come to ask for help with food or gas or someone in our parish might need help with rent,” Father Schrad said.

Vocations

The parish has seen five of its members be ordained to the priesthood. Presently they are offering prayerful support of another member, Taylor Fernholz, who is a seminarian for the Diocese of Sioux City. Fifteen women from the parish entered religious communities. There was also one parishioner, John Rudd, who was ordained a permanent diaconate. He continues to serve as deacon of the Mass at St. Patrick’s on a monthly basis.

Parish home to service-minded organizations

By **RENEE WEBB**
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The service-minded parishioners of St. Patrick Parish in Estherville are involved in a variety of projects to help others. Some projects assist the local community and others are more far-reaching.

Right-to-life newsletter

According to St. Patrick parishioner Marilyn Bose, the respect life newsletter started in 1973. Prior to the start-up of the newsletter and before Roe v. Wade had taken effect, Bose and a friend were making pro-life presentations to organizations about the horrors of abortions.

“We started the newsletter shortly after Roe v. Wade, but the work had begun before that,” Bose said. “At first the newsletter was put out only when new information came out; it wasn’t every

effort had since moved away, but Bose has had many other eager volunteers through the years. Some will help with the prep prior to mailing, others will help gather information to be included in the newsletter – which contains a mix of legislative news, pro-life campaigns and feature stories – and others help with labeling or taking them to the post office.

The newsletter is funded by a Knights of Columbus breakfast and the group sells flowers on Mother’s Day.

“We have been doing this for over 40 years. At first it went mainly to parishioners in Estherville and Armstrong, but now we send to about every state in the union,” she said. “At one time we sent out more than 2,000, but we send out about 1,500 now.” Two Protestant churches in Estherville are also among those who receive the newsletter.

With a background in medical technology, Bose said she understood what abortion did and couldn’t understand how people “could be fooled into believing it’s a blob of tissue. I’ve always thought we have to do our best to make people understand what is really happening here and that’s how it all started.”

Among Bose’s helpers is her husband, Dick, who is a retired medical doctor.

“I still remember I had been at the hospital at Spirit Lake and was headed back to Estherville driving pretty fast because I was anxious to make the morning rounds. I had the radio on pretty loud in the car with music I love when they broke in and said Congress had passed Roe v. Wade would permit abortion anytime from conception until birth,” he said. “I almost went into the ditch. I thought doctors will not permit this, we will get that bill cancelled somehow. Boy, was I wrong.”

Father Merlin Schrad, pastor of St. Patrick’s, has found Marilyn’s dedication to this project impressive.

“It really impressed me that someone could



Several parishers from St. Patrick’s are part of the Mission Quilters. Pictured are Lucy Renze, Becky Peters, Jo Augustine, Patricia Carr, Joyce Thornburg, Betty Reardon and Pat Metzger. (Submitted photo)

be so dedicated to respecting life. We should all be so dedicated, but do we ever really do anything,” he said. “The thought that they were thinking about that cause so long ago, trying to make a difference, is commendable.”

Mission Quilters

A Mission Quilters group was established in 1996 after the then-pastoral associate had asked women of the parish if they wanted to make a quilt to be auctioned off for the Annual Quilt Auction for the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Mankato, Minn.

“The idea for making many quilts formed during the making of that quilt,” noted Pat Metzger, a member of the quilting group. “The ladies hoped to make mission quilts as a group project and heard about a group of ladies in Milford that were making ugly quilts. That idea was used to make quilts as quickly as possible for warmth, not beauty; although many of the quilts are beautiful.”

September through April quilters work in the parish’s Duhigg Center every Monday afternoon for about two hours. Twelve women from both St. Patrick’s, as well as Immaculate

Conception in Graettinger, and one non-Catholic woman regularly participate.

“The quilts are made from yard goods, old sheets, old blankets, curtains, mattress pads, bedspreads, and so on,” said Metzger, who noted the quilts are about 70-inch by 80-inch. “The quilters rely on parishioners, the community and surrounding areas to provide these materials.”

Women usually work on the various layers of the quilts at home with sewing machines before getting together on Mondays to put the quilts together.

In the group’s first three years they made 265 quilts. As of this year in March, 4,849 quilts have been made and distributed both locally and throughout the region with the help of the School Sisters of Notre Dame to locations such as in Mankato and St. Paul, Minn., for the homeless and those in need.

In both cases – the quilting club and respect life newsletter – Father Schrad said individuals and the groups come together “to practice what their faith is and go out and be Christ to others.”

month.”
As interest in the newsletter grew, they opted to schedule the newsletter regularly on a monthly basis. Her original partner in the

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