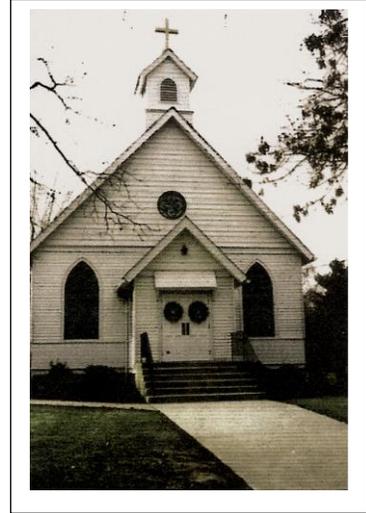


The History of St. James Church



This house on Dublin Road in Hopewell Twp is believed to be the first place of worship for St. James Church in 1895, though the church at the time was not officially recognized by the Diocese of Trenton.



Excavation began in 1899 for what we now call our "Chapel". Total cost: \$2300.



The "New Church" at was dedicated in 1987 and is now the main building for worship.

The History of St. James

The history of St. James is a story of continuous physical change as well as the constancy with which this faith community has shared their Christian values.

The first Catholics in the area were Irish immigrants who arrived shortly after the Civil War. They were hired as laborers for the railroad or as domestics. To attend Mass, they walked to either St. Mary's Cathedral or St. Francis Church in Trenton. In 1878, this trip was shortened slightly when Hopewell's Catholic Church was opened. It was still necessary to travel to Trenton for instructions in the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation.

ST. JAMES MISSION

In 1895, this tiny community of 5 families became St. James Mission when Fr. Francis Keuper began celebrating Mass monthly in private homes on Dublin Road. By 1898, lay trustees were named and plans were made for the construction of a church.

As a mission church attended by poor immigrant laborers, funds were difficult to come by; it was a real sacrifice when a canvas of the parish yielded \$95.10.

Fortunately, additional funds came from outside the parish, primarily from the established churches in Trenton (St. Mary's and St. Francis), as well as from Bishop McFaul and Fr. Keuper. Two local non-Catholics also made major contributions: Col. John Kunkle donated the land and Dr. Thomas O'Hanlon, President of the Pennington Seminary, in addition to a sizable contribution of \$100, offered a house for Masses while the church was being built. In spite of the meager resources of these early parishioners, they erected a church that accommodated many times their number for over sixty years.

In 1899, with funds in hand and the property on Eglantine Avenue acquired, the excavation for the cellar was begun, hand dug by volunteers. Laborers for the railroad during the day, these men then hurried back to the church site to accomplish as much as possible before daylight faded.

The total cost of the church was \$2300, funds on hand were \$2200. As no money had been allocated for pews, the families raised money to buy a dozen chairs. The organ was the personal property of Fr. Joseph Thurnes, who was assigned to the St. James Mission during the construction. He donated it when he died two years later at the age of 72.

By 1902, three masses per month were being celebrated in the new church and the parish continued to grow and prosper. Improvements were made to the building which included the installation of stained glass windows and the beautiful paneled ceiling. A number of priests were assigned to St. James from St. Mary's, Morris Hall, and St. Ann's. Among them were Fr. John Kucker (1914-1930).

On June 18, 1943, St. James was canonically designated a parish by Bishop William Griffin and Fr. Francis (Fr. Frank) Zgliczynski was appointed the first resident pastor. St. George's in Washington Crossing became our mission. Later, Our Lady of Good Council in West Trenton became our second mission.

ST. JAMES RECTORY I

The next several years saw a new flurry of activities. The house on Eglantine Avenue next to the church was purchased as the rectory. Parish organizations such as the Holy Name Society, the Women's Guild (later St. James Guild), the Junior Sodality, CYO and Senior and Junior Choirs were formed, and religious education programs for children were begun. In 1955, as these programs expanded, the house next to the rectory was purchased as a Parish Center and the first parish library was established.





“Little Church” & 1st Rectory

THE FAMILY CENTER

By 1965, the parish had grown to over 400 families. At that point, the original church could no longer accommodate all the parishioners for Sunday Mass. Plans were drawn up for the Auxiliary Building. The design of this building provided a large physical space for Sunday Mass, six classrooms for religious education programs, and the potential for having a Catholic School. The fund-raising goal was easily surpassed and ground was broken for the new building. The building was completed two years later and the first Mass was said in the gymnasium in 1967.

ST. JAMES RECTORY II

In 1969, after 25 years as pastor, Fr. Frank was transferred to St. Hedwig's parish in Trenton. Fr. Thomas Ryan was named pastor. The old Rectory and Parish Center were sold and the current rectory on Delaware Avenue was purchased. In preparation for the 75th anniversary of the “Little Church”, as it had become known, a Restoration Ball was held and funds were raised for repair and renovation. Much of the work was done by volunteers.

Fr. Ryan is remembered for his programs and concern for the youth, particularly teens, and for the dignified manner in which he faced his long illness and untimely death.

In 1977, Fr. James McConnell, “Fr. Jim”, was named pastor of St. James. The auxiliary building was renamed the Family Center and efforts were made to make the gym a better place to hold Mass. New spiritual and social programs were begun. An “Ashes to Easter” program was established as an in-home, lay-directed method of observing lent for small groups. Some who attended these programs established the youth group – C.R.A.S.H. (Christian Recreation And Spiritual Harmony) – and a new Vacation Bible School. The Fiesta Italiana was celebrated in October and St. Patrick's Day in March. A parish picnic was started in September, a tennis night in the spring, and nearly 200 parishioners “tubed down the Delaware”.

THE “NEW” CHURCH

By 1983, it was clear that the gym was neither large enough nor appropriate space to hold Sunday Mass for the growing parish. After considering several options, the parish voted with an 80% majority to build a new permanent church. Nearly 150 parishioners attended all day workshops with the architects to design our new worship space. Many parishioners continued to be very active in the development of our new home.

The new church was dedicated by Bishop Reiss on October 24, 1987 with the pastors of the seven other Churches in Pennington participating.

After 22 years of dedication, our “country pastor” Fr. Jim retired on Aug. 1, 1999. Today, parishioners still feel his welcoming presence each time they turn down McConnell Way – our Church entrance. Fr. Ronald Bacovin was named pastor. He was then named a Monsignor on July 28, 2008.

Over time, our Religious Education program outgrew the existing space, and plans were made to add 6 more meeting rooms. This addition was dedicated on September 19, 2010.

On June 30, 2012 Msgr. Ron Bacovin retired and we welcomed Msgr. Michael Walsh as our new pastor. With his Irish spirit, Fr. Mike roots us in mission and inspires us with a vision of our role as Christians in the greater community. In the summer of 2015 we were blessed with the addition of Fr. Jarlath Quinn.

Today, St. James has grown to 1500 families, some of whom are descendants of the men who dug the foundations of the “Little Church”. The parishes of St. James, St. Alphonsus & St. George share one Pastor and work together to be a welcoming presence in Hopewell Valley. Our parishes are blessed with many diverse ministries that aim to nurture the faith of our families and reach out to those in need beyond our borders.

Throughout our history, as our physical structure continues to expand, we remain “domus ecclesia” – the Home of the Church. We recognize all of the parishioners over the years who have made St. James “Church” and it is our privilege and joy to maintain it.

ST. JAMES TIMELINE

1895	-Celebration of First Mass in the Tyman Home on Dublin Road	1999	-Rev. James McConnell retired, Rev. Ronald Bacovin appointed 4 th Pastor – August 1
1897	-Formal establishment of St. James as a Mission Parish – June 14 th	2000	-Kevin Byrne & Richard Currie ordained permanent deacons for St. James – May 13
1899	-Laying and dedication of Chapel Cornerstone – July 11 th	2003	-William Moore Hank ordained permanent deacon for St. James – May 10
	-First Mass in Chapel – October 1	2008	-Rev. Ronald Bacovin named Monsignor – July 28
1943	-Elevation from Mission to Parish Church Fr. Francis Zaliczynski appointed 1 st pastor June 18 th	2010	-Patrick Brannigan ordained permanent deacon for St. James – May 12
1944	-Purchase of 8 Eglantine Ave. for 1 st rectory		-Dedication of new classrooms in Family Center – September 19
1955	-Purchase of 12 Eglantine Ave. for 1 st Parish Center	2012	-Msgr Ronald Bacovin retired, Msgr. Michael J Walsh appointed Pastor – July 1
1957	-Dedication of St. James Library in Parish Center	2015	-Msgr. Walsh appointed Pastor of all 3 Hopewell Valley Parishes
1961	-Erection and dedication of 1 st outdoor shrine to the Sacred Heart		-Fr. Jarlath Quinn assigned to assist Msgr. Walsh
1965	-Plans for all-purpose building (Family Center) accepted, -Ground breaking – November 14 th		
1967	-Dedication of Family Center, 1 st Mass – June 25		
1969	-Msgr. Thomas C. Ryan appointed 2 nd pastor – November 8 th		
1970	-Purchase of present Rectory and sale of 8 & 12 Eglantine Ave. properties		
1974	-75 th Anniversary of the building of the Little Church		
1977	-With the death of Msgr. Ryan, Rev. James J. McConnell appointed 3 rd pastor – December 9 th		
1985	-James W. Palsir ordained 1 st permanent deacon for St. James – May 11 th		
1986	-Groundbreaking for the new Church – October 25 th		
1987	-Dedication and 1 st Mass in new Church – October 25 th		
1994	-Rededication of the Chapel – October 1 st		
1997	-Opening celebration of our Anniversary Year Bishop John Reiss to celebrate Mass -100 th Anniversary of formal establishment of St. James as a Mission Parish – June 14 th -10 th Anniversary of dedication of the new Church – Bishop John M. Smith to celebrate Mass		

