

HISTORY OF ST. JOSEPH PARISH

The beginning of St. Joseph Parish was somewhat extraordinary, as was written in the parish centennial directory. Normally in a territory of Catholics without a parish church, the bishop would send a priest to organize and unite the congregation. This, however, was not what happened in Wesley. A group of determined Catholics did not wait for the coming of a priest, but instead, they erected a combination school and church building at a cost of \$10,000. They then petitioned the bishop for a priest. During the spring, summer, and fall of 1891, while the new building was being constructed, Fr. Henry Eckert, parish priest at St. Benedict, came to Wesley to celebrate Mass in a mercantile store, located where the Wesley Community Center stands today. Fr. Eckert then became the first parish priest at St. Joseph in Wesley in the winter of 1891, and he celebrated the first Mass in the new school chapel in December of that year.

Fr. Bernard Schilmoeller came to Wesley in 1895 and planned the construction of the new church. The present structure was completed in 1901 at a cost of \$17,000. Fr. Edward Jungblut came to St. Joseph's in 1908, and he commissioned the church to be decorated. Twelve original mural paintings, altars, and many sacred statues are still present today. St. Joseph's Church remains one of the most beautiful Gothic churches in the Diocese of Sioux City.

DONORS OF ORIGINAL CHURCH FURNISHINGS

High Altar	Ignatius Studer
St. Joseph Altar	George Spangler
Blessed Virgin Altar	Anna Kunz
Onyx Crucifix above Tabernacle	Michael Matern
Pieta	Ignatius Studer/Parishioners
Blessed Trinity Group	Amandus Studer
Sacred Heart of Jesus Statue	Ignatius Studer
Sacred Heart of Mary Statue	Pauline Hanig
Blessed Virgin Statue	Michael Matern
St. Rose of Lima Statue	Zita Studer
St. Anthony Statue	Anthony Studer
Marble Holy Water Fonts	Allie Kunz

DONORS OF ORIGINAL MURAL PAINTINGS

Resurrection	A & R Garman
St. Philomena	John Richter
Christ Blessing Children	Joseph Loebig
Holy Family	Sylvester Braunger
Guardian Angel	John Haverly
St. Aloysius	Louis Hauptman
Abraham & Isaac	Albert Bleich
Annunciation	Anna Kunz
Temptation of Christ	Otto Kunz
Ascension	Julius Kunz
Gethsemane	John Uhlenhake
Death of St. Joseph	Father Jungblut

Fr. Joseph Fisch arrived at Wesley in 1914 and remained until 1923.

He helped plan the new priest's residence, built in 1917.

The original rectory was moved across the street and still stands today.

Cost of the priest's residence was \$12,000, and the generosity of the parish covered the cost.

A beautiful Crucifixion Grotto was completed in 1925 at St. Joseph's Cemetery by Fr. Paul Dobberstein.

This special grotto remains today as an inspiration to all those who visit the cemetery.

St. Joseph's Church has been served throughout the years by 27 priests, including Fr. Steven J. McCloud, the current pastor. The parish has been blessed to have six native sons become priests and 34 native daughters become sisters.

Many parishioners assist in all ministries of the Mass, as well as Eucharistic Adoration, Divine Mercy, Pro-Life, Vocations, Special Prayer Services, Lenten Programs, Kids for Christ, Parish Finance Council, Money Counters, Parish Festival/Turkey Supper, Parish Guild /Funeral Dinners, and Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court Fidelius #342.

The CD of A was organized on August 25, 1918, and the name Court Fidelius was chosen in honor of Fr. Fidelius Goetz, the first native son of the parish to become a priest.

The CD of A is still an active organization, and throughout the years has done many wonderful things for the parish and for many different missions.

Present parishioners take great pride in their parish and continue what their ancestors began.

A beautiful church renovation took place in 2001, with no debt incurred.

This is a testament of their love for God and their willingness to serve when a need arises.

This wonderful faith community continues to come together to do God's will, as He alone is the source of all mercy, love, and forgiveness.