

PARISH PROFILE

Seattle's St. Patrick's takes peace, justice issues to heart

1918 Parish is founded under Ireland-born pastor Father Michael O'Dwyer, who the previous year oversaw construction of the first church, a 30-by-60-foot structure costing \$1,200. Father O'Dwyer is remembered for his daily three-hour walks.



1942 Ireland-born Father (and later Msgr.) Michael Murtagh begins his 23-year pastorate. Remembered by parishioner John Kloeck as a frugal man who dressed in "comfortable shabbiness," Msgr. Murtagh was responsible for an unexpected surplus in the annual parish budget one year when he neglected to pay himself, explaining, "I didn't think it was necessary."



1961 The current church is dedicated on July 23 by Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly. Costing \$234,000, its features include a 65,000-piece Venetian tile mosaic of St. Patrick located above the entrance.



1989 Victoria Ries begins her decade of service as pastoral life director, the first lay woman in the archdiocese named to the position.



1923 Combined church and school building is constructed. The school was started the previous year in the rectory, with second pastor Father Aloysius McHugh teaching fourth grade and lay teacher Mary Milner in charge of first and second grades.



1959 The last Mass is celebrated in the old church as construction of Interstate 5 looms. The freeway cuts through the heart of St. Patrick's, erasing the homes of at least 200 parishioners and leading to the closure of the parish school, staffed over the years by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. At a heated city council meeting to discuss the controversial new site for the church, Msgr. Murtagh quietly tells the council, "I'm the shepherd of my flock and we have no place to put our heads."



1990s Building upon its role as a sanctuary parish for refugees from El Salvador and elsewhere, St. Patrick's begins a sister parish relationship with the community of Nueva Trinidad in El Salvador that continues today.

St. Patrick's is community willing to stick its neck out for a worthy cause

SEATTLE
BY TERRY MCGUIRE

When Vicki Grayland moved to Seattle four years ago, she asked a friend in the know to recommend a parish with a strong social justice orientation.

St. Patrick's was one of two that came to mind. Grayland has been a parishioner ever since, and now co-chairs the parish's Social Justice Committee.

Like others before her, Grayland is finding in St. Patrick's a Christ-centered community with a history of progressive ministry.

It's a parish that was quick to embrace the spirit of the Second Vatican Council after the council's conclusion in 1965; a parish that's always been willing to stick its neck out for a worthy cause, even if controversial, from serving as a sanctuary church for refugees, as it did in the 1980s, to holding letter-writing campaigns or vigils on issues ranging from capital punishment to the war in Iraq to cuts in state social programs, as it does today.

"Peace and justice is really the heart of the parish," said Father Patrick Clark, former archdiocesan schools superintendent, who is in his sixth year as St. Patrick's pastor.

The words are prominent in the parish mission statement, which states in part: "Our Sunday liturgy, enhanced by the creative arts, strengthens us for the work of peace and justice in the world and challenges us to live in communion with one another and all of creation."

That work is carried out daily by a range of parish groups and ministries, from a homelessness task force to an El Salvador sister parish relationship to efforts to make people with physical or developmental disabilities feel an integral part of the parish.

Deaf and blind Catholics from all over the Seattle area attend the 10 a.m. Sunday Mass, where interpreters lead them in the liturgy. Probably half the parish knows American Sign Language terms, Father Clark said. The parish commits

approximately \$12,000 annually to providing the interpreters for liturgies, faith formation classes and other gatherings, and for deaf or blind Catholics serving on parish groups or wanting to attend the meetings.

The parish is also home to residents from the three local L'Arche houses for people with developmental disabilities. This year's sole baptism at the Easter Vigil will be of L'Arche community member Patty McNair.

Active community of just 250 households

St. Patrick's is a relatively tiny community of just 250 households. And probably less than 50 of them live within the parish boundaries, Father Clark said. The rest — who come from as far away as Everett, Federal Way and Issaquah — are drawn by the parish's progressive reputation and its extensive outreach, he said.

"We're small," notes Parish Council President Peggy O'Brien-Murphy, a parishioner since 1970, "but there's so much that is covered, so much that is done, so much that people care about."

Longtime parishioners trace some of St. Patrick's magnetism to the parish leadership of the 1960s and 1970s, including the ecumenically and interfaith-minded Father William Treacy, social activist Father Joe Kramis and the charismatic Father Marlin Connolle. Good Shepherd Sister Vera Gallagher, who became an expert and well-known author on survivors of childhood sexual abuse, was St. Patrick's parish life coordinator in the 1970s and 1980s. Victoria Ries, the parish's parochial minister/pastoral life director from 1989 to 1999, was the first lay woman in the archdiocese to hold that position.

St. Patrick's was a parish where folk Masses, Marriage Encounter, Charismatic and Cursillo movements, and ecumenical and interfaith efforts were either born or flourished early on.

Freeway runs through neighborhood

Like any community with a long history, the parish has faced its share of challenges over the decades. Interstate

5 and Highway 520 cut swaths through the neighborhood. The I-5 construction starting in 1959 erased at least 200 parish homes. The church and school building also were razed, bringing an end to the school.

Decades later, the parish went years without a full-time pastor.

But JoAn Choi, St. Patrick's pastoral associate and a parishioner since 1973, marvels at the community's "ability to endure."

"In the 30 years I've been here there's always been some kind of major change or where it feels like, 'Are we going to be able to keep going?'" she said, "and the community keeps moving along."

St. Patrick's is both a "resilient and cohesive" community, says 41-year parishioner Marilyn Kavanaugh. And she admires the way in which they're always willing to try new things.

And although Father Clark is the type who prefers to deflect praise (he didn't want his photo to run with this article), Kavanaugh and others credit him in part with the parish's continuing vibrancy. He inspires and challenges them to strive to be a Vatican II parish, O'Brien-Murphy said.

"To me, and to most of us — especially the parish council — he seems to be the kind of pastor who isn't working from the hierarchy down but (instead) gives the people the responsibility of being church, which is what the Vatican II emphasis is ... and he's right there in a tremendously supportive way."

Ministries flourish

Father Clark, however, prefers to shine the spotlight on his small parish's many ministries.

In addition to its peace and justice efforts, the parish boasts strong and innovative liturgies. Choir director Laura Ash, and her husband, David — both members of the parish — are musicians and composers with a national reputation. O'Brien-Murphy says her husband likens the quality music at St. Patrick's to "going to a concert you'd pay money for."

In addition, Betsey Beckman integrates liturgical dance into special liturgies.

ST. PATRICK PARISH, SEATTLE

Founded: **1918**

Households: **250**

Address: **2702 Broadway Ave. E. Seattle, WA 98102**

Phone: **206-329-2960**

E-mail: **mari@stpatsseattle.org**

Web site: **www.stpatsseattle.org**

Pastors

Father Michael O'Dwyer, **1918**

Father Aloysius McHugh, **1921**

Msgr. Michael Murtagh, **1942**

Father William Treacy, **1964**

Father Joe Kramis, **1971**

Father Jim Moran CSP, **1981**

Father Clyde Peterson, **1999**

Father Tony Bawyn, **2001**

Father Patrick Clark, **2003**

In other areas of parish life, the Ecumenical & Interfaith Ministry, led by parishioner John Hale, carries on the work started by Father Treacy, sponsoring gatherings of various denominations and faiths, including the annual Praise and Thanksgiving Celebration held at St. Patrick's in November.

And the facilities committee, which gathers every Saturday to perform maintenance tasks, "has saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years," Father Clark said.

Then there's the Social Justice Committee, which in addition to its work of lobbying and making people aware of the issues hosts a One World Crafts Fair every November to promote crafts from developing nations.

"I think the real secret of St. Patrick's," says the pastor, "is that it's got a good correlation between the spiritual and the active."