

A History of St. Andrew's Waterford

By some historical standards, St. Andrew's Church is not old. We celebrated our fiftieth anniversary in 2001. At fifty plus years, though, St. Andrew's is certainly out of its infancy and adolescence, and well into that phase of its life that is marked by stability and the continuous refining of its mission and ministry.

As early as 1947, there was a call to establish an Episcopal Church presence in the Drayton Plains/Waterford Township area. Supported by the Diocese of Michigan, the Rev. Ivor Curtis, rector of All Saints Church, Pontiac, began the process of establishing this presence. What is now St. Andrew's, began as a parochial mission of All Saints Church in Waterford. In 1947, Waterford was a resort community, mostly of summer homes surrounding the many lakes which dot Waterford Township. The principal route to Waterford and beyond was Dixie Highway. In 1947 Dixie Highway was, for much of its length, a gravel road, a far cry from the four and six lane busy thoroughfare that it is today. Fr. Curtis called together a group of five ladies from the Drayton Plains area to form a guild. It was the purpose of this guild to explore the feasibility of forming All Saints Chapel in Waterford. This group of five, originally known as Guild No. 9 of All Saints, later became St. Martha's Guild, and soon grew to seventeen members. Through the dreams and efforts of this Guild it became clear that there was more than enough interest to establish a mission in Waterford Township. In these early days Morning Prayer was often said in the living rooms of the Guild members. Frequently, the morning office was said in the home of Harriette and Harry Richardson. Today the lounge/gathering area of St. Andrew's Church is named for the Richardsons in recognition of their dedication to the founding of the Parish.

In 1949, the Rev. Dr. Bert F. A. Ede was sent by the Diocese to All Saints for the purpose of establishing its mission in Waterford. Under Dr. Ede's leadership and the dedication and hard work of the guild members and their families, the Episcopal Church established a formal presence in the area. An arrangement was made with the Community Activities, Inc. Building (hereafter the CAI Building) on Williams Lake Road to hold services there. On July 1, 1951, Dr. Ede conducted the first service of All Saints Episcopal Chapel. There were 137 individuals present for that service. Through gifts from friends at All Saints and other parishes, the altar was completely furnished. It is the same altar that we use today. The choir from All Saints Church joined in the inaugural celebration. Later that week the nascent congregation was saddened by the sudden death of Dr. Ede. Services continued with the help of visiting clergy until a new Vicar could be secured.

In October of 1951, clergy leadership passed into the able hands of the Rev. Waldo Hunt. Services continued to be held at the CAI building, but the stay there was to be short. Growth continued and so did the hard work of countless committed individuals. The first annual meeting was held on Monday, January 7, 1952. At this meeting, the congregation took the necessary legal action to complete organization as a Parochial Mission of All Saints Episcopal Church. On Sunday, September 14, 1952, the congregation learned that its name had been changed to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Drayton Plains. By this time, it was clear that new home had to be found. Waterford Township was growing and along with it, St. Andrew's Church.

Property became available at what was formerly the Drayton Theater on Dixie Highway near Sashabaw Road. St. Martha's Guild led the effort to raise half of the money needed to purchase the property. With All Saints agreeing to fund the other half of the purchase price, St. Andrew's first "permanent" home was acquired. To convert this building into a church, major reconstruction work was needed. There was no money to hire professionals. Instead, the congregation drew upon the considerable talents of its members, many of whom were extraordinarily generous with their time and talents. Leveling the floor, updating the furnace, building classrooms and a sanctuary drew members of St. Andrew's much closer to one another. The first service in this building occurred on March 1, 1953. Even with all the hard work and dedication of the congregation, the outside of the building still did not look much like a church. In addition, the congregation continued to grow, and St. Andrew's began once again to experience space limitations. A decision of great consequence faced the congregation. The Dixie Highway property was a prime location on what would clearly be an extraordinarily busy street. Yet the property was "landlocked" on all sides. Discerning that it was the Parish's purpose to grow, after much debate it was decided to seek a new home for the parish on a "roomier" site.

The search ended three years later when almost six acres on Hatchery Road was purchased. Then, on Whitsunday, May 20, 1956, ground was broken for the first unit of St. Andrew's next "permanent" home. Original plans intended that this first structure serve for the time being as a Church House and Educational Unit, which was eventually to become the Parish Hall and Classrooms. Work on this first unit was completed in June 1957. St. Andrew's Church finally had a place which could accommodate its growth. Yet it was clearly understood that what had been built and dedicated on Hatchery Road was just the first step of a multi-phased project. There was still a yearning for completion, for a home that looked, and felt more like a Church. The parish continued its rapid growth and by 1960, annual attendance reached well over 16,000 individuals. In 1960, St. Andrew's moved beyond its mission status and became a full-fledged parish in union with the Diocese of Michigan. Fr. Hunt, its former Vicar, became St. Andrew's first Rector. On Thursday, July 20, 1960, the congregation was saddened once again when it learned of the sudden death of Fr. Hunt.

Lay readers and relief clergy filled in until the arrival of the Rev. Edward A. Lowry and his family on Sunday, January 1, 1961. Then St. Andrew's congregation took a new lease on life and continued to grow. The next building phase saw the erection of a rectory which was to be used by the Rector and his family. In 1965, a strong urge to build a New Church was felt among the members. To determine the feasibility of building this new church, a Planning Committee was formed, and questionnaires were circulated among the congregation. The responses to the questionnaire and formal conversations throughout the congregation indicated that another expensive building project would place too great a burden on the parishioners at this time. In 1963, to reduce this burden, a dedicated group of women opened a "Thrift Shop" with the purpose of raising money for future expansion of the church. The Thrift Shop continued to function faithfully and contribute regularly to the maintenance and improvement of the building for the next thirty plus years. In 1968, the Parish found itself in the unenviable position of searching for a new Rector after Rev. Lowry resigned.

From September 1968, through April 1969, the Lay Readers and Relief Clergy filled in. On April 20, 1969, the Rev. M. James Fleming began his tenure as the rector. Over the next few years, the desire to build a "Church" remained strong and planning continued. On February 27, 1972, the rectory mortgage was paid in full, and the congregation began planning again to build a larger church.

After much work by the Vestry and Congregation, the first shovels of sod for the second unit of St. Andrew's permanent home were turned on Palm Sunday, March 23, 1975. The dedication service for the new church and furniture was held on Palm Sunday, April 11, 1976. In pursuing this expansion, the parish took on a substantial debt. To meet this burden, the congregation began a new ministry. For the next twenty years members of the congregation could be found working at the Pontiac Silverdome in Concession Stand 110. This important ministry helped to keep the church financially stable through some very trying times.

April 15, 1979 was to be Fr. Fleming's last service as he resigned to go into private business. Later that year the Rev. William Evans arrived. Fr. Evans worked conscientiously to help St. Andrew's move through the difficult times of Prayer Book revision and women's ordination. His stay with us ended in 1986, when he also resigned. The Rector's duties then passed to the very capable hands of the Rev. James C. Berg in June of 1987. After many years of declining attendance, the church began to grow once again. This growth renewed the desire of the congregation to begin planning the next phase of expansion. A much-needed parking lot paving project was completed in 1989.

Serious discussions about St. Andrew's future, including its building requirements, began in 1992. By mid-1994, a Building Committee had been formed and recommended to the Vestry that St. Andrew's embark on a multi-phase expansion and up-grading of its facilities.

The first phase included building new rest room facilities, a new choir rehearsal room, enlarging the sacristy and acolyte's rooms, and upgrading the facility to make it barrier free throughout. A Finance Committee was formed to raise the funds needed to embark on phase one. Through the generosity of members and friends the expansion project became a reality in 1997.

After more than 30 years of dedicated service the Thrift Shop closed its doors for the last time at the end of March 1996. It is difficult to determine how much money the Thrift Shop contributed to the parish over the years. It was doubtless many thousands of dollars. Its intangible contributions of faithfulness and loyalty are incalculable. The Thrift Shop's final bank balance of over \$6,600 was used for special projects after the phase-one expansion was completed. The storage space which was used by the Thrift Shop is now in use by the Sunday School.

St. Andrew's welcomed its first associate rector, the [Rev. Robert F. Wollard](#) in 1996. Fr. Wollard has been the key in developing a high-quality adult education program at the Church. Several other ministries have also benefited from his considerable skills.

The Rev. Ann Williams served as Parish Deacon for five years beginning in 1995. She began, and in her retirement continues to help sustain, a ministry to the mentally ill. St. Andrew's has also been blessed with the ministry of Deacon Williams' successor, [The Rev. Dcn. Marilyn Stroud](#).

As is so often the case in historical sketches like this one, the shape of the parish history is determined by a succession of clergy and building projects. These are not the most important features of the common life of St. Andrew's or any parish. What is most important is the sharing of the life of faith over long periods of time. For in such sharing, we are formed as disciples. Such formation, however, is subtle and probably occurs most importantly in prosaic activities, in washing dishes after a parish supper, in stuffing envelopes for a parish mailing, in countless telephone calls and committee meetings. Much that is the heart of the story is hidden in the ordinary events of life. St. Andrew's is accumulating a rich history of these ordinary events, a history that enlightens and strengthens all who will participate in it.