

## Church History

In 1958, sixteen Catholic Families in the North Windham area began attending Mass. A couple of years later, some of the original CCD classes for the children of Our Lady's were held at St. Joseph's College in nearby Standish. Up to that point, many of the area's Catholics attended Mass in surrounding towns such as Westbrook, Bridgton, and Mechanic Falls. As the population in the North Windham and Raymond area grew, it became apparent that more appropriate arrangements were needed. In 1967, the Diocese defined the North Windham area as a mission (an extension) of the newly formed parish of St. Anne in Gorham with Msgr. Roland Normande serving as Pastor. To meet the growing needs of the area, Sunday Masses were held at the Lakeland Dance Hall in North Windham. Lakeland Dance Hall was used as a "make shift" church until in October, 1968 when Masses were moved to the Windham Union Parish Hall. In October 1969, folks returned to St. Joseph's College for a short period of time. Masses were then conducted at the then vacant Federal Super Market where they continued to worship until the construction of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church was built in December, 1970.

This new building was to serve as a multi-purpose unit. It would include the Church, Sacristy, Chapel, kitchen and side wings. The wings were used for religious education in the winter and opened up in the summer to accommodate the influx of vacationers at weekend Mass. Due to the rapid growth, the decision was made to have Our Lady of Perpetual Help become a parish. In June of 1974, Our Lady welcomed its first pastor, Msgr. Robert G. Lavoie. Completing the complex, in the spring of 1975, was the Rectory. During the initial formation of Our Lady's Parish, a Parish Council and six commissions were formed. In 1976, Sisters of Mercy, Sr. Pauline Dionne, and later, Sr. Carmelle Poutre formed Our Lady's Religious Education Programs. The sisters divided time between the newly formed Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in North Windham, and St. Anne's in Gorham. From the summer of 1976 until 1989, Sister Carmelle was Our Lady's full-time Director of Religious Education.

Also, in 1976, the parish was fortunate to receive the services of a permanent deacon, Mr. Rod Berger. Rod, his wife Pat, and their children were members of our parish until 1983. During 1983, Rod accepted a new assignment as Chaplain of several hospitals in the Waterville, Maine area. From 1976 to 1980, our Parish grew from three hundred families to some five hundred families. With this significant growth, we realized the need for a larger facility. A building committee was appointed to develop plans for an expansion. After a three year building drive, our parish facility was upgraded to meet the needs of the time. The original building was moved back from its location near Route 302. The wings were then modified to allow for an additional two hundred seats. A parish hall was constructed that would accommodate the CCD classes as well as social functions. Soundproof dividers enabled us to transform the hall into ten classrooms. Separate rooms were added for a sacristy, three offices and a workroom. An open, spacious area, called the Narthex, was added connecting all of the areas of the church. These facilities were completed and ready for occupancy in the winter of 1981.

After eleven years as the first Pastor of Our Lady's, Msgr. Lavoie accepted the position of Pastor of St. Hyacinth's Church in Westbrook in 1986. Also in that year, Sr. Carmelle left to pursue studies in pastoral care in Washington D.C.

In July of 1986, the Reverend Leo Goudreau became the second pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. Fr. Goudreau was the inspiration behind the formation of Our Lady's Guild which was the former women's club. In June of 1987, Fr. Goudreau left for active duty in the U.S. army Chaplain Corps. Additionally, in 1986, Reverend Charles O'Connell became the Deacon.

In June 1987, Rev. Donald Proulx was assigned to Our Lady's as the third Pastor.

In 1989, The Knights of Columbus Msgr. William G. Cunneen Council #10020 became part of our parish family.

1990 brought more improvements. A Chapel was built with a basement and classrooms. It was dedicated to Domenic J. Pirozzi. The parking lots were paved, and a chain link fence was installed. A grotto, with the Statue of Mary, was erected, a generous gift of the Lady's Guild.

The Renew process began in 1992 with 32 small prayer groups. The prayer groups met at different times of the day during the week. Some of our parishioners continue to this day meeting in small groups as part of the original Renew process.

In 1997, as a result of water damage, renovations to the kitchen were made. Upgrades included new sinks, cabinets, additional heaters and, insulation. The new kitchen was dedicated to Dr. Anita Violette. Poor health caused Father Donald R. Proulx to retire in May of 1998. His 11 years of service to Our Lady's brought much growth and many positive changes. Following Fr. Proulx in June of 1998, Father Edward Thomson became fourth Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. At the same time, the Reverend, Mr. John Brennan became the Permanent Deacon replacing Deacon Charles O'Connell who had passed away in January of 1998. In October of 1999, the community of Our Lady's was saddened to learn of the death of Father Donald R. Proulx. His many contributions to our Parish will have a lasting impact for many years to come.

Our current pastor is Fr. Normand E. Carpentier. Accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of Portland, he was assigned to St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, MD where in May of 1970 he was awarded a Masters of Divinity degree.

Ordained to the Priesthood for service in the Diocese of Portland on May 29, 1971 at St. Louis Church, Auburn, by the late Bishop Edward C. O'Leary, he served as Parochial Vicar in several Maine parishes. On July 1, 1981 he was appointed Parish Priest at St. James Parish, Baileyville, his first pastorate, with responsibility for St. Ann's Parish, Indian Township. In July 1983, he was asked to serve on a team of three Parish Priests with responsibility for ministry at Sacred Heart Parish, Portland, the Maine Medical Center, and the University of Southern Maine. On July 1, 1987 he was appointed Parish Priest at St. John the Baptist Parish, Winslow and for ten years had served as Parish Priest at St. Margaret's, Old Orchard Beach until his most recent appointment as Parish Priest at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Windham, on July 1, 2003.

Father Carpentier is a member of the Diocesan Priests' Personnel Board, and Vicar Forane (Dean) of Deanery VIII.