



OUR HISTORY



SAINT JULIA PARISH

SAINT JULIA PARISH - OUR HISTORY

St. Julia Parish is the Catholic community of Weston and Lincoln, Massachusetts.

From the 1850's to 1900, the two towns were part of larger, multi-town parishes. Weston was originally a mission of Saxonville parish, which also included the missions of Wayland, Framingham, Natick, Rockbottom, Stowe, Sudbury, Needham, Ashland, Hopkington and Assabet (Maynard).

Weston Catholics traveled to St. Mary Church in Waltham for Mass, or to St. Zepherin or St. Ann in Wayland.

Lincoln Catholics attended Mass at St. Bernard Church in Concord, at St. Mary in Waltham, or at St. Brigid in Lexington.

In the early 1900's, Catholics in Weston and Lincoln began to celebrate Mass in their own towns, first as missions, and then as St. Julia and St. Joseph Parishes. They continued this way until August, 2004, when the Boston Archdiocese instituted a parish reconfiguration. St. Joseph Parish became a part of St. Julia Parish, but St. Joseph Church is still maintained as a worship site in Lincoln.

The history of each community has been compiled here using a number of sources written for special occasions in the past. The original documents, along with additional anecdotes from parishioners.

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1914 - 1919: MISSION OF ST. MARY, WALTHAM.

St. Mary Parish of Waltham maintained a mission in Weston, sending a priest every Sunday to say Mass in the old Town Hall, which was located on what is now the Town Green, opposite the Josiah Smith Tavern. Two priests who grew up in Weston, also came to say Mass, Father William Conroy and Father James Walsh. After completion of the new Town Hall in 1917, both Episcopalian services and Catholic Masses were held there. Confessions were heard before Mass. There was a growing population of Catholics throughout Massachusetts, including Weston, where many were employed to work on the estates of wealthy landowners.

AUGUST 11, 1919: ST. JULIA PARISH ESTABLISHED

St. Julia Parish of Weston was established by William Cardinal O'Connell, who appointed Fr. William J. Foley as its first pastor. The church is named after the patron saint of Fr. Foley's mother, Julia. This may be the only Catholic Church in the United States named for St. Julia. A number of Weston landowners, many of whom worshipped at First Parish, supported the development of this new Catholic Church so that their employees could worship in Weston.

1919 - 1921: ST. JULIA CHURCH BUILT

Land in the center of town was purchased from George W. Cutting, Jr., with the help of many of the wealthy members of the First Parish (Unitarian). The architects, Maginnis and Walsh, were nationally known as designers of Catholic churches and institutions. Construction by John Capobianco cost \$50,000. Local fieldstone for the facade was obtained from the Coburn family and from the Cronin and Sheehan families, who donated the stone walls from their own properties.

DECEMBER 25, 1921: FIRST MASS IN ST. JULIA CHURCH

The first Mass was said in the newly constructed St. Julia Church, which seated 300 people. A used parlor-organ was brought to the church in a horse-drawn cart. Mrs. Eunice Bassett served as the parish's first organist and continued to play well into the 1960's, close to when she died in 1966. A two-story house was purchased and moved to the site behind the church to serve as the rectory. One Mass at 9:00 a.m. was said at that time, with about 100 people in attendance. Father Foley lived in the rectory, with his sister Katherine Foley, who helped furnish the new church and rectory. A beautiful baptismal font was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Woods.

1923 - 1937: PASTOR WALTER SWEENEY

Father Walter Sweeney served as the second pastor of St. Julia Parish. Since he was in poor health, Jesuits from Weston College began coming regularly to St. Julia to celebrate Mass. Daily Mass was held in the rectory because it was too costly to heat the church every day during the Great Depression. The Filene family, owners of Filene's department store, regularly sent groceries to the rectory and personally supplied refreshments for social events. The Filenes, who lived off Church Street, were one of the first Jewish families in Weston. Altar boys were sent during the winter to gather wood from Mr. Bassett's lumber yard on Saturday night to heat the church for Sunday morning Mass. Since it was too expensive to heat the church except for Sunday Mass, Choir rehearsals were held at the Bassett home.

1937 - 1941: PASTOR FRANCIS CUMMINGS

Father Sweeney retired and Father Francis Cummings was installed as pastor. Father John "Flash" Fogarty was assigned as the first curate since the parish was growing and more Masses were needed. He was dubbed "Flash" because he took so long to say Mass. In 1940, Katherine Foley donated the Hammond organ in memory of her brother.

1941 - 1945: HOLY NAME SOCIETY, SODALITY, JUNIOR CHOIR

Father John Dowd was installed as the next pastor. The Holy Name Society became active during this time. Our Lady's Sodality was formed in 1942, as was the first Junior Choir. This was a period of parish growth, social events and significant fund-raising. In 1941, Father Dowd paid \$6,000 to purchase the adjacent old Cutting's General Store, which had closed in 1939. He razed the store and cleared the land for construction of a parish center. But the parish would have to wait another 55 years before the center became a reality. Father Dowd "wore himself out", according to many, and died in 1945.

1945 - 1951: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXPANDS

Father Leo Sullivan became the next pastor of St. Julia Church and, because he was in poor health, he called often on the Jesuits at Weston College for help. The Religious Education program had 80 children from first through seventh grade, and Confirmation was administered to seventh graders at that time. Religious education classes were held in the Jones House (now the Josiah Smith Tavern). In 1952, the baptismal font "disappeared". Mr. and Mrs. Paul Cronin of Cronin's Department Store in Waltham, donated a new baptismal font.

1951 - 1960: FR. JOSEPH CASEY COMES TO ST. JULIA

After Father Sullivan was re-assigned to his home parish, St. Mary, Star of the Sea, in East Boston, Father William Gorman was named pastor. However, his health failed very soon after he arrived, and Father John McGlinchey replaced him at the end of his first year. A few years later, Father Joseph Casey, S.J., a Jesuit from Weston College, began his faithful tenure of assisting at St. Julia Church. In 1953, when Father McGlinchey had to take a medical leave, Father Casey served informally as an interim pastor for 6 months. Father Frank M. Graf was sent as an administrator under Fr. McGlinchey, when Fr. Casey was called to teach at Boston College, starting in 1956. Fr. Casey continues to serve at St. Julia Church to this day.

1953: FIRST YOUTH GROUP FORMED

The first "youth group" at St. Julia Parish was formed for girls in 11th and 12th grades. In 1958, about 80 high school students attended Sunday school classes. By 1962 when formal CCD programs were established in parishes, that number jumped to 153 high school students.

1956 - 1965: THRIFT SHOP FOUNDING

Father Graf became pastor of St. Julia Parish after Fr. McGlinchey died in 1960. Under his leadership, the church became very active. He created a sacristy in the basement of the church for the altar servers, and helped foster bazaars and other fund-raising social events. He started the St. Julia Thrift Shop.

MARCH, 1961: ADDITION TO ST. JULIA CHURCH

By the early 1960's, six Masses were held each Sunday, most with standing room only. Work began on an addition to the back of St. Julia Church to increase seating capacity. It was designed by the original architectural firm, now Maginnis, Walsh and Kennedy, and was constructed by Richard White and Sons. A basement was excavated under part of the original church for an auditorium where Masses could be said during the renovations. The old rectory house was moved yet again to the lot adjacent to the church to make way for the addition. C.C.D. (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) classes, as religious education classes were known then, were held in the Jones House (now the Josiah Smith Tavern) during construction.

MAY 12, 1962: FIRST MASS IN RENOVATED CHURCH

The first Mass was said in the newly expanded St. Julia Church, which could now seat 500 people. The addition created a new and larger space for the altar and included a new sacristy and the new basement used for religious education classes. The addition was so seamless that it is difficult to see where the old meets the new part of the building. Father Graf was named a Monsignor shortly before the 25th anniversary of his ordination. At that time Mass was still said with the priest facing the tabernacle, with his back to the congregation. Communion was distributed by priests only, to parishioners who would come up and kneel at the altar rail. At that time Communion was not received in the hand, but placed directly by the priest on the tongue.

JULY, 1965: MONSIGNOR ROSSITER ARRIVES

Father Graf died two months after burning the mortgage on the St. Julia Church addition and became the first pastor to be buried in Weston. Monsignor Francis S. Rossiter was assigned to St. Julia as his successor. Father Rossiter came to St. Julia with a background in Sacred Scripture studies, having studied in Rome and at the Catholic University of America in Washington. He was a well-known professor at both St. John Seminary in Boston and at Blessed John XXIII Seminary in Weston, and was honored by two popes for his work.

1965 - 1992: VATICAN II, VIBRANT GROWTH

Monsignor Rossiter served as pastor of St. Julia Parish for 27 years, much longer than most pastors serve in a parish. He guided St. Julia through a time of tumultuous changes and events: Vatican II, the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, the Kennedy assassinations, and the Nixon scandals. He organized the first St. Julia Women's club in 1965. The club provided social opportunities for the women of the parish, and, along with the Thrift Shop, raised significant funds for the ever-growing costs of running the Parish. The CCD program flourished under Monsignor Rossiter's early years, and reached a peak of 850 children. The Monsignor hired the parish's first Superintendent of CCD, along with a secretary for the program. CYO Youth Basketball began under his pastorship, as did the St. Julia sponsorship of Boy Scouts, Troop 157.

OCTOBER, 1968: PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL ESTABLISHED

Monsignor Rossiter established the first Parish Pastoral Council at St. Julia Church. Shortly afterwards, the first Parish Finance Council was appointed.

SPRING, 1969: GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

To build a new rectory and parish center, St. Julia began a fund drive which raised \$350,000. The parish celebrated its Golden Jubilee 50th anniversary.

1971 - 1972: A NEW RECTORY

The new rectory was built adjacent to the church on Boston Post Road. The much-desired parish center had to wait due to massive debt incurred during the Archdiocesan building boom of the 1960s. The old rectory, still standing behind the new rectory, was used for religious education classes. St. Julia Church was home to a number of curates while Msgr. Rossiter was pastor, including Father Joseph Connolly, Father Paul Sughrue, and Father John Geoghan.

1992: MONSIGNOR ROSSITER CELEBRATES GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Monsignor Rossiter celebrated his Golden Anniversary of priestly ordination. A grand parish celebration was held in his honor. In keeping with the Archdiocesan policy of pastors retiring at the age of 75, Monsignor Rossiter retired as pastor of St. Julia Parish later that year. From 1992 until close to his death in 2003, Msgr. Rossiter took up prison ministry part-time, tirelessly visiting and counseling prisoners and serving Mass. Father Robert W. Tyrrell was installed as the 10th pastor of St. Julia Church on July 1, 1992.

1992 - 1995: PASTOR ROBERT TYRRELL

Father Bob re-energized St. Julia parish after a period of quiet decline during the 1980's. Father Bob began a campaign and to raise the \$2 million needed to build the long-awaited parish center. During construction First Parish Church warmly welcomed St. Julia parishioners to use its classrooms for religious education. Father Thomas Kelly served as parochial vicar in these years. Father Bob hired St. Julia Parish's first Pastoral Associate, Susan Bayard, to assist him in the pastoral duties of a parish which had grown to serve more than 900 families. The music and religious education programs were rejuvenated with the hiring of Brian Moll and Melinda Donovan. A part-time business manager was added to assist the pastor with the increasingly complex financial matters involved in running the parish. A number of wonderful priests came to serve Mass regularly at St. Julia, including Father Gerry Demers and Father Eugene Trainor, and our dear Father Joe Casey.

OCTOBER 6, 1996: PARISH CENTER DEDICATION

The new Parish Center, designed by the Sudbury firm of Dion and Sokol, was blessed and dedicated by Bernard Cardinal Law. The building houses a large function hall used for parish gatherings and rented out for other events, as well as 10 classrooms for Religious Education, office space, and a conference room.

1998: YOUTH MINISTRY COMMISSION FORMED

St. Julia Parish's first Youth Ministry Commission was formed to address the needs of Catholic middle and high school youth of the parish. The Commission recommended hiring a part-time Youth Ministry Coordinator. Our first Youth Ministry Coordinator was hired in the fall of 1999. A new Youth Group, comprised of 11th and 12th grade students, started in 2000, and continues to plan social and service events, as well as opportunities to participate in Sunday liturgies.

1998 - 2000: SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITIES FLOURISH

St. Julia Parish went through a period of great activity and a revitalization of the Religious Education program under the leadership of Father Bob and a dynamic new staff. New spiritual groups were formed, including a Bible Study group, a mothers' group, and a women's spirituality group. Father Bob revived traditions such as the May Procession and the children's Christmas Pageant. The parish instituted a number of giving programs for needy families and schools in the Boston area. It began a popular gala fund-raising event that has taken place almost every year.

2000 - 2002: THE ABUSE SCANDAL ROCKS THE CHURCH

These years were tainted by the revelations of sexual abuse by some Catholic priests, which had been going on for many years, and the discovery that these crimes had been covered up by the Boston Archdiocesan hierarchy over the years. Although the most significant toll of pain and suffering has been, and continues to be, borne by the victims and their families, the entire church was rocked by the scandal. Trust in the hierarchy and in the church itself was severely betrayed. St. Julia parishioners had to come to grips with the reality that a convicted abuser, John Geoghan, had served in this parish for a number of years; he later died in prison. Churches all across Massachusetts, including St. Julia Parish, experienced the loss of parishioners and a significant drop in donations. The revelations of sexual abuse within the Boston Archdiocese triggered the exposure of other such crimes in parishes not only across the nation, but worldwide. The Boston Archdiocese, along with many U.S. parishes, has since instituted a number of protocols, including background checks and child abuse prevention (CAP) training programs, to ensure a safe environment for all.

2002: FATHER BOB RETIRES

The stress of these difficult times in the church, coincident with rapidly deteriorating health, led Father Bob to make the difficult decision to take a medical leave, resulting in his eventual retirement as pastor in the Spring of 2003. He served St. Julia Parish well, with sincere love, great energy, joy and true dedication, for close to 11 years.

SEPTEMBER, 2003: FATHER GEORGE EVANS COMES TO ST. JULIA

Father George P. Evans, from the faculty at St. John's Seminary in Boston, was formally installed by Boston's new archbishop, Sean O'Malley (made Cardinal in March, 2006), as St. Julia's 11th pastor on September 8, 2003.

1904: MISSION OF ST. BERNARD, CONCORD

St. Joseph Church was established as a mission of St. Bernard Parish of Concord. The land for the church was donated by Mrs. Helen Welch. St. Joseph Church was built on the foundation of an existing house on the property, and designed by Chickering and O'Connell Architects of Boston.

1927: FIRST CHURCH RENOVATION

St. Joseph Church was expanded to provide additional seating. With the addition to the rear of the church, St. Joseph could seat 200 people. During the construction, Masses were held at Doherty's Garage on Lewis Street.

NOVEMBER 27, 1945: ST. JOSEPH PARISH ESTABLISHED

St. Joseph Church was established as a parish, with Father Joseph A. Quigley serving as its first pastor. Father Quigley had to live in the small, cold sacristy before a house from the Ryan family, located behind the church, was purchased to serve as the rectory.

1946: ST. JOSEPH GUILD AND HOLY NAME SOCIETY

St. Joseph's Guild and the Holy Name Society were established. Father Quigley died on December 7, 1946.

1946 - 1955: PASTORS CONLON AND RONAN

In 1946, Father Thomas Conlon became the second pastor of St. Joseph Parish, followed by Father Edmund J. Ronan, who served from 1950 to 1955.

1957 - 1961: A 'PRIZE-FIGHTER' PASTOR

Father Francis McLaughlin served as pastor of St. Joseph Parish. A "quiet and holy man", Father McLaughlin had been an amateur prize fighter before he entered the seminary.

1962 - 1964: PARISHIONERS PAINT THE CHURCH

Father John McDevitt was appointed pastor of St. Joseph Church. It was in 1962 that major change came to Catholic churches under the Second Vatican Council. To foster lay involvement and to save money, he asked the men of the parish to paint the exterior of the church. Twenty-four men did so in one day, with the women providing a dinner afterwards.

1963: LEGION OF MARY FORMED

The Legion of Mary, a group devoted to honoring the Blessed Mother, was formed at St. Joseph Church. They also visit the homebound, the sick in hospitals, and those in nursing homes.

1965 - 1968: ECUMENICAL OUTREACH

Father Ernest Pearsall served as pastor of St. Joseph Church and fostered greater communication among the various churches of Lincoln. The town's first ecumenical service was held at St. Anne's in the Field (Episcopal) on Sunday, June 27, 1965. Father George Murphy succeeded Father Pearsall in January, 1968 and remained as pastor until 1985. Two Jesuits from Weston College assisted during this time, since the parish was flourishing. Father Richard Philbin, S.J., served for a few years, followed by Father Patrick Sullivan, S.J., in 1979, who continued to serve at St. Joseph through 2006.

MAY, 1985: FATHER DRENNAN COMES TO ST. JOSEPH

Father Lawrence Drennan was installed as pastor at St. Joseph Parish, following Father Murphy's retirement. A group of parishioners "decided that the rectory needed a major overhaul". Parishioners donated their time and money to clean the entire rectory thoroughly, renovate the kitchen, rewire the house, replace walls and purchase new furniture and carpets.

1985 - 1995: A PARISH REVITALIZED

Father Drennan set about to revive St. Joseph's Parish after the turbulence of the 1970's. He assessed the needs of a changing parish, which now included new young families moving into the increasingly upscale town of Lincoln. He revived the liturgical music program and rejuvenated the St. Joseph Guild. His homilies brought people back to Mass. The St. Joseph Guild raised funds for the church, primarily through dinner dances at Nashautuc Country Club, garage sales and fairs. The Guild also began its ministry to the poor, reaching out to the less fortunate at its sister church, St. Patrick in Lowell, and providing meals at Bristol Lodge Soup Kitchen in Waltham.

MARCH 3, 1987: FIRE AT ST. JOSEPH CHURCH

A fire struck St. Joseph Church, destroying the sanctuary and damaging the large crucifix behind the altar. This catalyzed a much-needed church renovation project which would bring St. Joseph Church into conformity with Vatican II reforms.

1989: FIRST PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

St. Joseph's first formal Parish Pastoral Council was formed, followed by the establishment of the Parish Finance Council.

EASTER, 1992: FIRST MASS AFTER RENOVATION

The renovated St. Joseph Church, designed by Dennis Keefe of Keefe Associates, was opened for Mass. Many parishioners held fund-raising events to finance the renovation. Coleman Ridge, a parishioner from Carlisle, volunteered to serve as the general contractor for the renovation. During the construction phase, Masses were held at the Brook School auditorium and in the community room at Lincoln Woods.

1993: THE RYAN ESTATE

The Ryan Estate behind St. Joseph Church was developed to meet the needs of the elderly in town and at the same time make available more space for the growing parish of St. Joseph. In a 99-year lease between the church and the Ryan Estate, the church gained a community room for large functions, special lectures, and space for religious education classes within the new elderly housing complex, as well as some parking spaces. The first function held in the Ryan Room was a St. Patrick's Corned Beef Dinner on March 17, 1993. This was the first of many functions held there including Communion breakfasts, spaghetti dinners, receptions and Sunday coffees, all organized by the St. Joseph Guild.

1997 - 2002: FATHER JOHN KILEY

Father Drennan ended his stay as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in 1997. He was assigned to St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Bridgewater. Fr. Drennan was succeeded by Father John Kiley, who served as pastor until December, 2002, when he went to serve at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Ipswich. A St. Vincent de Paul Conference was formed to help Lincoln families in need. A food pantry was established to collect non-perishable foods every month.

2003 - 2004: FATHER MARK MAHONEY

Father Mark Mahoney was assigned as administrator of St. Joseph Parish until August, 2004. It was in this period that the Archdiocese of Boston launched a major reconfiguration of its parishes. As a result of the ongoing shortage of priests, exacerbated by the sexual abuse scandal and increasingly serious financial difficulties, the Archdiocese made the painful decision to close a number of parishes. This process was extremely painful, particularly for the affected parishes. At this time, it was decided that St. Joseph Parish would close, as a parish, but that St. Joseph Church would be kept open as a church of St. Julia Parish in Weston. The newly configured parish would be called St. Julia Parish, Weston/Lincoln.

AUGUST, 2004: ST. JOSEPH BECOMES PART OF ST. JULIA PARISH

St. Julia Parish, in its 85th year, welcomed St. Joseph parishioners as the two were formally joined to become one parish serving Lincoln and Weston. It was decided to have two Sunday Masses and three weekday Masses at St. Joseph Church, and that religious education classes for the lower grades would continue in Lincoln. A number of devotions and parish activities would continue in the St. Joseph House, the former rectory. All councils and commissions welcomed representatives from the Lincoln community.

OCTOBER, 2004: 100TH ANNIVERSARY

The 100th Anniversary of St. Joseph Church was marked with a Mass concelebrated by Father George Evans, pastor of St. Julia Parish, Father Lawrence Drennan, and former pastor of St. Joseph Parish, and Father Patrick Sullivan, longtime visiting priest of St. Joseph Parish. Deacon Raymond Levreault assisted. A festive luncheon reception, hosted by St. Joseph Guild, was held in a tent next to the church.

FOR WE ARE ALL ONE IN THE LORD

Today, these two parishes, united in 2004, continue to forge their spirit, their cultures and personalities, together in the name of being one with Christ. Father Evans has brought an honest, spiritual presence to the parish, and great sensitivity to the pain that we have all felt in our churches these last five to six years. With him we hope to nurture this newly configured parish, made even better and fuller with our neighbors in Lincoln who have joined us. May we always trust in the truth of what we are about and not be afraid of where the Lord takes us. May we all stay active and involved in this, our church, the living body of Christ.

Despite the struggle of reconfiguration, our parishioners are engaging in their faith, in new opportunities for youth and adult education, in fellowship and in service to the community. There is new life in the parish. There is hope. New friendships are forming, and with them new energy and ideas for the parish as a whole. It is our hope and our undying faith in Christ at our center that we, the Church, nourished by his body and his blood, and forgiven by the Father, will be renewed by the Holy Spirit. We resume, together, our mission of building the Kingdom of God with peace and justice for all - for that is the TRUTH, the LIFE, and the WAY of all Christians.

SOURCE MATERIALS

This timeline was compiled in April, 2006, by **Chantal Buchanan with the St. Julia Communications Commission**, using the following sources:

- "Memoirs of St. Julia's Parish", January, 1962, by Eunice Caldwell Bassett
- "Historical Notes", St. Julia Church, Golden Jubilee, 1969, by Mrs. Ralph Rubado with the Golden Jubilee Historical Committee
- "St. Joseph Parish, Lincoln, Massachusetts, 1945 - 1995", by Joseph P. Sheehan, Jr.
- "History of St. Julia Parish", written for the Parish Visitation, 1997
- History page of the old St. Julia website, by Susan Bayard, and updated by Fr. Evans, 2003
- "Farm Town to Suburb, the History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts, 1830-1980", by Pamela W. Fox, 2002