

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Lourdes

The history of Our Lady of Lourdes parish began in 1858 in the area around Crane Creek, when Catholics first gathered for Mass offered by circuit-riding priests, including Father Louis DeCalley, grandnephew of Bishop Matthias Loras. Catholics in the area were placed under the care of Fr. Michael McCarty in 1872. By 1875 the parish numbered 75 members who built the St. Mary's Church. Lourdes was originally an Irish settlement but through the years it has seen Czech, Slovak and German immigrants joining its ranks.

Fr. John Garland was assigned to the parish in the fall of 1877 as first resident pastor. He was succeeded by Father Eugene O'Keefe. Under the leadership of the next pastor, Fr. James J. Nelson, the parish built a Gothic style brick church in 1901. It was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title "The Immaculate Conception," which is inscribed on the cornerstone. During the dedication ceremonies Archbishop John Keane promised to obtain a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes for the parish and directed that the title of the parish be changed accordingly.

Father John Norris was pastor from 1905 to 1917. The parish built a three-story building in 1908 housing parish hall, classrooms, convent, and dormitories. Sisters of Saint Francis from Clinton and served the parish until the school closed in 1969.

The parish welcomed Father Frederick Renier in December 1923. The thirty-year-old combination school and convent was destroyed by fire in 1938, but pastor and parish rallied to build both a convent and a school-gym.

Msgr. John Hemann was named pastor in 2002 which was made a six parish cluster named the "Good Shepherd Faith Community." He retired in July 2005 and Lourdes joined four other parishes under the title "Holy Rosary Cluster." In 2007, the parish built a new multi-purpose room in the northeast corner of the church and paved the driveway two years later. Steeple Days, is observed by the parish each July. The event features a polka Mass, breakfast, children's games, a tractor pull, softball tournaments and other fun activities.