

## **Immaculate Conception Parish, Riceville**

The first families to arrive in the Riceville area in 1856 attended Mass in a little log church at Lower Wapsi, later named St. Cecilia. In the 1860s they were joined by other families of Irish and German descent. In those early years priests came from Charles City to celebrate Mass in private homes.

In 1879 Father James Saunders oversaw the building of a church in Riceville, dedicating it to Mary under the title "Immaculate Conception". The first resident pastor of the new church was Father James J. O'Brien. A rectory was built in 1890. Father Arthur F. Stirn, who served from 1953 to 1960, guided the parish in building a new church, which was dedicated on May 8, 1960. Father Stirn died on Friday, May 6, 1960 just two days before the planned dedication. His Requiem Mass was held in conjunction with the dedication ceremony for the new church.

Father Joseph Bohr served as pastor from 1960 to 1977. During his pastorate, the debt was retired and in 1967 Mark McGovern was ordained to the priesthood. In 1977 Father Gregory Hemesath was appointed pastor and served until 1984.

Under Father John Moser's guidance the Father Arthur F. Stirn Knights of Columbus Council 11592 was founded in 1995. The Knights donated a memorial stone to the pre-born victims of abortion, which is located east of the rectory. Fr. Ray Atwood became pastor in 2000. An elevator serving all three levels of Immaculate Conception church was installed along with a carport in 2002.

Today our parish is considered to be healthy and vibrant as it is served by many parishioners who take part in various liturgies. Other parishioners serve as teachers of religious education, parish council members, board of education members, Calvary Cemetery Directors, and other parish committees. St. Anne's Rosary Society is active in the upkeep of the church and organizes the Fall Festival. St. Rita's Study Club prays together, studies the Bible, and raises funds for charitable organizations. In addition Immaculate Conception Parish is part of the Riceville Ministerial Association, which hosts ecumenical Lenten reflections at the Riceville Care Center and a Baccalaureate Service at the local public high school in May.