

History of St. Joseph Church, Williams Minnesota

Early Catholic settlers in the area were served by missionary Fr. St. Armant who traveled by horse or buggy from Pinewood Ontario and then by foot through the forests to celebrate Mass in homes. In 1909 the first church was built on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Pat Woods, which would now be just north of the present forestry offices. The Woods also donated land further south for a cemetery in which two of their children were the first to be buried.

In 1916, St. Cloud Church was built on the corner of Meloney Ave. and Pine St. with the approval of Fr. Ernest Bossus (1913-1926). The building, 40 x 60 feet, was built in part with funds from the Catholic Church Extension Society. Regular services were every second Sunday of the month with Mass at 8 am and 10 am, Sunday school at 3 pm, choir practice at 4 pm and evening service at 7:30 pm. The first church organ was in use from 1916-1939.

A new church was built in 1940 by the Ebletoft brothers of Baudette. Usable lumber from the old church was incorporated in the new building located across the street to the west from the Williams school. The new church was renamed St. Joseph and was dedicated by Bishop J.H. Peschges D.D. on December 8, 1940. An addition to the social hall and renovation of the kitchen was completed in 1973 when Fr. Raymond Palcisko (1971-1977) was pastor.

Williams has always been a mission church, mostly served from Baudette but briefly around 1935-36 it was a mission of Warroad under Fr. Shanahan and again in 1970 with Fr. Clement Cloutier and early 1971 Fr. Eugene Wesley serving as pastors. Fr. Clement Cloutier also served as chaplain at the Air Force Radar base south of Baudette. In recent years there have been 30 – 40 registered households. St. Joseph's Ladies Aid has regularly served a wonderful turkey dinner each fall. While Fr. Cyril Foppe, OMI (1987-1997) was pastor he designated the Saturday evening Mass of opening of deer hunting season as the Hunter's Mass and encouraged hunters to attend: hunting wear welcomed.

Deacon Jim Lukenbill has been serving the parish since his ordination in June 1996. Fr. August Gothman has been our pastor since July 2011.

This article was written by request of the Diocese of Crookston for the up coming 100th anniversary book.

Much of this history is from the Our Lady of the Woods Catholic Community 75th Anniversary book printed in 1983.

Additions to the history were written by Joan Heinrich, parish secretary.
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