

The History of St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church (1972-2010)

(Last Updated: October 20, 2010)

In The Beginning

The story of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish began in 1972 when a committee from St. Raphael Parish began searching for land for new parishes in the fast growing North Raleigh area.

On September 21, 1981, Father Gerald L. Lewis, pastor of St. Raphael Parish, purchased 22.525 acres on Bayleaf Church Road. This property would become the future site of St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church. This parcel was located in the woodland close to Falls Lake within the watershed of Barton Creek known as northern Raleigh. The purchase price was \$242,862.

The Early Years – Raleigh Fireman’s Club (1984-1988)

On Palm Sunday, April 15, 1984, Father Terrence Collins, Associate Pastor of St. Raphael Parish celebrated the first Mass at the Raleigh Fireman’s Club located 0.6 miles west of the current property on Bayleaf Church Road. The Fireman’s Club served as site of all parish liturgies from 1984 until 1988. The original agreement to rent the Fireman’s Club was arranged by Father Lewis for \$50/day.

There were about 75 people present at the first Mass. From Father Collins’ account, it was raining so hard that Sunday that some people were joking about St. Luke being under the Neuse River and the name stuck. Besides, the gospel that day was taken from St. Luke the Evangelist.

Father Robert Shea – Founding Pastor (1985 – 1994)

On June 3, 1985, Bishop F. Joseph Gossman of the Diocese of Raleigh wrote a letter of confirmation to Father Robert F. Shea of St. Mary Parish in Wilmington, NC announcing him as the founding pastor of St. Luke Parish.

On July 9, 1985, Bishop Gossman officially established the parish. The territorial boundaries of St. Luke Parish were defined as follows: West - Creedmoor Road and the Durham County Line; North - The Neuse River; East - Falls of Neuse Road; South - Strickland Road.

Father Michael Shugrue, Dean of the Raleigh Deanery officially installed Father Shea as pastor on July 14, 1985. Father Shea took up residence at Litchford Park Apartments on Litchford Road. He later relocated to a house at 508 Woodwind Court in Coachman’s Trail which served as the parish rectory until 1992. Various parish-related meetings were held in both locations until completion of the Multipurpose Building on the property in 1988.

Father Shea celebrated his first Masses as pastor at 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM at the Raleigh Fireman's Club on July 21, 1985. By August 1985 the new parish had 59 families and 209 people registered.

On June 7, 1986, Father Shea, was stricken with a heart attack. Sunday masses were celebrated by visiting priests while he was recuperating.

The Parish Community (1985- 1987)

In September 1985 the Liturgy Committee and the Religious Education Department were formed. Blanche Ellison was the first staff member hired to head the Religious Education Department.

On September 29, 1985, the Building and Real Estate and Finance Committees were established. The Committees were chaired by Mike Benigno and Joe Sander respectively.

On October 20, 1985, Matt and Lorry Petrovick organized the First Annual Parish Picnic ("Get Acquainted Fair") on the grounds of the Raleigh Fireman's Club, with about 310 people in attendance.

Some Parish Firsts

- Jane Frances Maceda first child baptized. (September 15, 1985)
- The first Sunday bulletin published. (October 13, 1985) The lector listed for 10:30 Mass is Elaine Ewbank.
- First meeting of the Parish Council held with Jim White serving as president. (January 27, 1986)
- The Most Reverend Joseph Lawson Howze, Bishop of Biloxi, Mississippi is the first bishop to visit and celebrate Mass at the Parish (Fireman's Club) and later confirms the first group of five confirmation candidates from the parish at St. Raphael Church. (February 9, 1986)
- First adult, Jane Kelly, received into the church at the parish. (February 15, 1986)
- First funeral Mass held for parishioner, Michael Rynne (February 20, 1986)
- Father Shea celebrates the first First Communion liturgy for twelve children. (May 4, 1986)
- Father Shea celebrates first Baccalaureate Mass. (June 1, 1986)
- Bishop Gossman confirms the first group of 11 St. Luke candidates at the Raleigh Fireman's Hall (March 2, 1987)
- Father Shea celebrates first parishioner marriage, Paul Heilig and Catherine Valeri. (March 7, 1987)

Construction of Multipurpose Building (1986-1988)

On August 24, 1986, the Building and Real Estate Committee hired John Stec, PA, of John Stec and Company to design a master plan for construction on the 22.525 acre site on Bayleaf Church Road. Stec presented the sketch of the first phase of the building to the parish community on September 14, 1987. The Committee hired Jedco General Contractors to build the first phase Multipurpose Building.

Grading permits were issued on December 4, 1987 and official ground breaking ceremonies took place on January 17, 1988. The building permit came on February 22, 1988. Unfavorable weather did not deter the builders from finishing the church ahead of schedule. The certificate of occupancy was finally handed over to Father Shea on Friday July 1, 1988. Scrambling to get the church ready, with a few parishioners, Father Shea celebrated the first Saturday Mass at 5:30 p.m. on July 2, 1988 with 79 people.

On Saturday, September 16, 1988, Bishop F. Joseph Gossman presided at the evening liturgy with Father Robert Shea and Father Gerald Lewis (pastor of St. Raphael's) and other concelebrating clergy as the congregation gathered to dedicate the 7,000 square foot Multipurpose Building.

However, the dedication activities extended beyond the September 16th Mass. The Sunday Liturgy featured the commissioning of religious education teachers, followed by an ecumenical service and open house with ministers and members from nearby Protestant church communities.

With the completion of the Multipurpose Building, Father Shea hired Laura Sancineto as the first full time Parish Secretary. St. Luke's continued to grow at a steady pace. In July 1988 there were 196 families.

Construction of Rectory and Grotto (1992-1993)

Construction of an on-site rectory, (a two-story, three bedroom colonial home, located in the wooded area adjacent to the church) was begun in the spring of 1992. Parishioner Tom Colopy was chosen as the contractor. Numerous parishioners also lent their talents in completing the entire dwelling. An Open House was held in February 1993.

When the grounds were being cleared for the parish rectory, parishioners James Terracina and Larry Adams approached Father Shea about turning the natural area to the northwest of the church into a Grotto with Stations of the Cross among the pine trees. Many hours of love and heavy labor transformed the area into a beautiful, peaceful Grotto for prayer, reflection and celebration of Masses in October and May of each year. The statue of Our Blessed Mother, donated by a parishioner, welcomes all who come for peaceful meditation.

Father David D. Brockman (1994 – 2002)

In July 1994, Father Shea was reassigned to St. John the Baptist Parish in Roanoke Rapids, NC. Parochial Vicar Father David D. Brockman, of Our Lady of Lourdes in Raleigh, was named the new Pastor of St. Luke.

The Community celebrated its tenth anniversary as a parish in the Raleigh Deanery on July 1, 1994. Father Brockman and Father Shea joined together for the celebration and anniversary festivities.

In 1994 Deacon Phil Newton joined the staff part time and began assisting with weekend liturgies and high school CCD. Deacon Newton served the Parish until 2000.

At the Easter Vigil in 1998, in a moving ceremony fondly remembered by parishioners, Father Brockman welcomed his father into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church.

Under the shepherding of Father David Brockman, the parish continued to grow to more than 400 registered families totaling 1200 members by 1997.

Construction of the Pastoral Life Center & Renovated Worship Space (2000-2001)

After many years of prayerful discernment by the parish concerning a second building phase, a Long Range Planning Committee was formed. This Committee took just over a year to discern the priorities of St. Luke's as the parish approached the second millennium. The Committee recommended the construction of a new 17,000 sq. ft. Pastoral Life Center. The parish selected WKWW Architects of Charlotte, North Carolina to design the building and Rigs Harrod Builders Incorporated of Durham as the general contractor.

On Sunday, August 13, 2000, with "golden" shovels in hand, a formal ground breaking celebration for the St. Luke's Pastoral Life Center was held with Bishop F. Joseph Gossman presiding and Father David Brockman assisting. Father Robert Shea, our Founding Pastor, also attended.

The entire building project, consisting of the Pastoral Life Center, the renovated worship space and the enclosure of the Gathering Space, was completed in just one year. The Pastoral Life Center consists of administrative space, a parish hall, a full commercial kitchen, eleven classrooms for faith formation including a room for youth and an adult formation room. While the formal worship space was being renovated, Father Brockman celebrated Masses temporarily in the parish hall of the Pastoral Life Center. The first Mass was celebrated in the new worship space on Saturday August 11, 2001. The parish had grown to 500 registered families consisting of 1500 members in the St. Luke community.

Father Brockman and the St Luke Liturgy Committee worked with Conrad Schmitt Studios to design four stained glass windows to enhance the worship environment of St. Luke's. The subjects for the windows are four liturgical themes from the Gospel of Luke: the Annunciation, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son and the Road to Emmaus. They speak of the need to practice service, acceptance, love, tolerance and prayer, while recognizing and welcoming Christ in our lives. Working together with Father Brockman and the church, the Studio created designs that tell these essential Christian stories. The Romanesque windows have been filled with stained glass pictures that incorporate rather traditional figures and a border in a simplified style that coordinates with the contemporary architecture of St. Luke's. The themes, designs and colorful palette of stained glass use natural light to beautifully illuminate the mysteries of God and humanity.

Father Brockman and the St Luke Liturgy Committee also commissioned wood sculptors Norbert and Victoria Koehn to design statues of the Blessed Mother and St. Luke for the worship space.

Father Joseph G. Mulroney (2002-2010)

In July 2002, Father Brockman accepted an appointment from Bishop Gossman to study Canon Law at the Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. Bishop Gossman named the Reverend Joseph G. Mulroney, pastor of St. Ann Parish in Clayton NC, as the new pastor of St. Luke's.

In 2002 Deacon Frank Barnes joined the staff part time and began assisting with weekend liturgies. Deacon Barnes served the parish until 2004.

In 2004 Father Mulroney instituted a new religious education paradigm known as Total Lifelong Catechesis (TLC). Under TLC, entire households, children, teens, and adults are instructed together on the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and on how to connect those teachings to their every day family life so that all members of the family can actively participate in the Life of God and His Church.

In November 2004, Ralph Poyo and Michael Sanchez were ordained as permanent deacons and installed at the parish.

In 2005 Father Mulroney hired Jeff Rice as the parish's first full time Director of Music and Liturgy.

On June 8, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI appointed the Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge as 5th bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh succeeding Bishop F. Joseph Gossman who retired.

On June 7, 2008, Bishop Burbidge ordained Michael Spurr to the Priesthood. Father Spurr attended St. Luke's as a parishioner before entering the seminary. He celebrated his first Mass with St. Luke parishioners at the 11:00 AM liturgy the next day.

On Christmas Eve, 2008, Bishop Burbidge joined Father Mulroney in celebrating the Children's Christmas liturgy with the children of the parish.

In 2009 the parish purchased and installed a new Rodgers Allegiant digital organ for the worship space.

On May 22, 2010, Bishop Burbidge ordained John Victor Gournas to the Priesthood. St. Luke's was Father Gournas's "home" parish during his time as a seminarian. Father Gournas celebrated his first Mass with parishioners at the 11:00 AM liturgy on May 23, 2010.

On June 30, 2010, Bishop Burbidge granted Father Mulroney, a temporary leave of absence for spiritual renewal. During Father Mulroney's three month absence, Father John Forbes Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Church and Dean of the Raleigh Deanery, served as acting Parish Administrator. Msgr. Desmond R. Keenan, Msgr, David Brockman, Father Forbes, and other visiting clergy celebrated weekend and daily liturgies during this time.

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church in Raleigh celebrated its 25th anniversary October 15-17, culminating with the Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of Raleigh, presiding at the 11:00 am Mass on Sunday. Concelebrants were Reverend Robert F. Shea, Founding Pastor, 1985-1994, now retired; Reverend Monsignor David D. Brockman, Vicar General and former Pastor, 1994-2002; and Very Reverend Joseph G. Mulroney, Pastor, 2002-present. Father Mulroney was Homilist.

The 25th Anniversary weekend began on Friday night with a concert presented by the Parish Choir and Orchestra. Music was selected to represent characteristics of the St. Luke community.

On Saturday evening, Father Shea, Father Mulroney, Deacon Michael Sanchez, the pastoral staff and 80 parishioners attended the anniversary dinner. Former pastors, founding families and staff were recognized through a slide show. Jeff Rice, Music Director, created a documentary video for the event, "*Celebrating 25 Years of St. Luke History.*"

"We must never forget the hard work of people who evangelized us in our lives. We are standing on the shoulders of so many people who made this parish the faith community that it is," said Father Mulroney in his homily. "We need to evangelize, because the next generation who stands here in 25 years as we celebrate the 50th anniversary will want to know the same truth, the same faith and celebrate the same Sacraments and be fed in the same way that we are with the Body and Blood of Christ."

The 25th anniversary Mass was followed by a Festival Picnic featuring the Dixieland Band, food and games.

Father Mulroney continued his priestly ministry as pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist until November 4, 2010.

St. Luke's Staff (1985-2010)

Pastors

- Father Robert F. Shea (1985-1994)
- Father David D. Brockman (1994-2002)
- Father Joseph G. Mulroney (2002-2010)

Deacons

- Phil Newton (1994-2000)
- Frank Barnes (2002-2004)
- Ralph Poyo (2004 – 2007)
- Mike Sanchez (2004 – Present)

Parish Secretaries

- Laura Sancineto (1988-1998)
- Rose Pisconski (1999-2005)
- Peg Fleagle (2006 – Present)

Music Ministers

- Paul Krebs
- Gretchen Robens
- Phil Kregor (1985-Present)
- Nina Pollack
- Mike Ritchey
- Kevin Kinnaird
- Jeff Rice (2002 – Present)

Faith Formation/Religious Education Staff

- Blanche Ellison (1985-1990, 1993-1997)
- Barbara Krebs (1991-1992)
- Marion Danforth (1991-1992)
- Gayle Hillada (1996)
- Margie Burton (1997 – 1999)
- Sherry Maloney (1999 – Present)
- Ralph Poyo (2004 - 2007)

- Michelle Fober (2007 – Present)

Youth Ministers

- Michael Ellison
- Jim Morris, Sr.
- Ralph Poyo
- Tony Melton
- Russell Hoyt (2009 – Present)

Other Staff

- Jane Turro, Bookkeeper

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church
Founding Members 1985

Andrews, Don & Mary
Auen, Bill & Bing
Bailey, Jim & Rita
Bartodus, Robert
Baudreau, James & Roberta
Benigno, Mike & Grace
Berg, Eric & Marcela
Brown, Harry & Nancy
Byrne, Mike & Ginny
Campion, James & Phyllis
Conroy, Ray & Mary
Couchois, Jack & Susan
Crumlich, Don & JoAnn
Ellison, Carl & Blanche
Ewbank, Rodger & Elaine
Farrell, John & Tracey
Gannon, Larry & Jean
Georgi, William & Lee Ann
Gerdes, Carl & Norma
Heatherington, Ray & Donna
Holden, John & Sandy
Jensen, Richard & Rose
Kallus, Tom & Royce
Kauer, Alex & Cathy
Kearney, Mark & Margaret
Kregor, Phil & Donna
Liberatore, Hank & Nora
Manning, Charles & Dena
Manning, Bernie & Pat
McClure, Roc & Dana

McCord, Ron & Diane
McCreery, Howdy & Rose
McHugh, John & Jane
Moore, Lloyd & Jane
Moore, Robert & Marilyn
Morris, John & Edna
Orlando, Frank & Jeanette
Odenwelder, John & Missy
Palumbo, Ken & Jane
Parajon, Robert & Margaret
Parzygnat, Kenneth & Marsha
Petrovick, Matt & Lorry
Pirotte, John & Deborah
Pollock, Michael & Nina
Rinn, Robert & Cathy
Rutherford, Richard & Marge
Sander, Joe & Marie
Sands, Evelyn
Scharenbrock, Jim & Joan
Schmidt, Stephen & Sheryl
Sicotte, Conrad & Mary Frances
Szeker, John & Kathleen
Tomczak, Dan & Denise
Vinitsky, Carl & Judy
Weigold, James & Laura
Wenhoff, William & Kathy
White, Jim & Charleen
Whyte, Richard & Alice
Will, Ray & Helen
Zikos, Bernie & Jean