

In 1912 the **Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions** had bought a house nearby and had started teaching from there until the school was built in 1914.

The Sisters prepared the children for 1st Holy Communion, in June 1912 it was the first time the sacrament was celebrated in the church.

Growing in faith

In 1933 a report on the Bishops visitation showed that within the Parish boundaries the catholic population was 519.

The excerpts in this booklet has been sourced from *A Goodman's Legacy* by Patricia Bartley.

The History Committee would like to hear from parishioners who may wish to share information they have of the early years of the Immaculate Conception Parish.

Information on the history of the Immaculate Conception parish is available on the parish website
<https://ellersliecatholic.org.nz/history/>

“We are guardians of our memory, our history is everything & fundamental to our identity” (attributed to St. Paul)

Parish History Committee



Our Lady Of The Immaculate Conception Church Ellerslie

120 year Anniversary

September 2024

History of the Catholic Church in Ellerslie.

This year marks a significant milestone as we celebrate the 120th anniversary of our parish.

In the coming months the History Committee will share with you a timeline of notable events in the 120 year history of our parish. We remember our clergy and parishioners through the years whose efforts and contributions have shaped our parish community.

Fr. Walter MacDonald 14 Dec 1830 - 31 Dec 1899



In the early years, our parish was known as the Walter MacDonald Memorial Chapel. Fr. Walter was an inspirational & much loved priest of the Auckland diocese. He came to Auckland from Ireland in 1855. He was ordained a priest in Auckland by Bishop Pompallier. He was a Chaplain to the Ellerslie Racecourse. The foundations of the catholic community in Ellerslie was set by his example, his love of God, and his understanding of the worth of all people.

The NZ Herald, reported on 4th Jan 1900, that the funeral of Fr. Walter MacDonald was the largest that had ever been seen in the city.

On **April 3rd 1904** on Easter Sunday the church foundation stone was laid, it was then officially named as Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The Ellerslie church is the only church in the Auckland Diocese built in memory of a much loved priest.

The Early Years

The church was built at a cost of £850.

Prior to the Ellerslie church being built, Mass was attended by people at the Cairns Hall.

The congregation at the time consisted of **13 families**.

Fr. Patterson who served at Panmure and who continued to serve mass at the Cairns Hall, told the people that they would soon need a church of their own. The suggestion was approved and he created subscription lists which were sent all over Auckland.

A group of some of the early parishioners assisted in organising a bazaar to raise funds for building the church in Ellerslie. The proceeds of **£63** raised from the bazaar, was set aside for the new church.

It was decided to use the funds to purchase a piece of land in the **Cooper Estate** which was one of the half acre sections offered for sale. An excellent section was bought at the cost of **£2/15 a foot**.

The Committee were commended on their foresight in selecting such a splendid building site.

In the early years the church survived on shared resources by a number of priests from neighbouring parishes like Onehunga, Howick, Panmure.

Some of **the early Shepherds** who served at Ellerslie

Fr. Patterson	1900-1902
Fr. Michael Tormey	1903-1905, 1908-1917
1st resident priest.	
Fr. Francis Buckley	1906-1908, 1924-1925
Fr. William Ormond	-
Msgr. James Hackett	1918-1923
Fr. William Dunphy	
Fr. Wright	1923-1924
Fr. Dean Thomas Lane	1925

The Ellerslie Church Hall

In May 1934 at Easter the church hall was opened at Easter, the opening function was celebrated with a blessing and a grand opening ball on Easter Monday.

The building was completed at a cost **£1,100**.

The church hall was built in 1934. The hall was a popular venue for the Saturday night dances of the 40s and 50s which are remembered by many and was booked out for a number of events by people from the community such as the **Ellerslie Catholic Tennis Club Annual Ball** held on 14th May 1934. St Mary's dance floor was considered at the time to be one of the best in Auckland and was a popular for dance classes.

A Community practicing their faith

Apart from the Mass on Sunday and daily during the week Rosary and Benediction were available every Sunday evening and frequently on Tuesday evening. There were Novenas and Missions and during Lent the stations of the cross and 40 hours of devotion.