

## ST. COLUMBANUS CHURCH – A PHOTO HISTORY



The old church, 1877-1928  
(Built by Fr. Pribyl of Owatonna)



Raymond & Mercedes Standke, 1950  
(note the new church's early high altar)



Tom & Barb O'Connor, 1952  
(note the new church's early high altar)



The current church was dedicated on Sept. 9, 1928.  
(The rectory is missing; it was added in 1955-56.)



The church today, after a century of worship.  
*How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord God of Hosts!*



Longtime organists included Mae Hunter & Marian Becker.  
Our bell was cast in 1892 & consecrated by Bishop Cotter.



Stained glass windows were installed in 1953 & 1955.  
They trace the life of Jesus and Mary.



In 1953, Fr. Boecker remodeled the sanctuary (T. Boecker)



Bill & Margaret Noble Wedding, 1960



First Communion, 1963 (Carol Heimerman)



Note the new free-standing altar, 1965 (Dorothy Green)



Fr. Boecker remodeled the sanctuary again after Vatican II (Fr. McNallan added the west entry; wedding, 1980)



Fr. Halloran remodeled the sanctuary in 1987 (Bob Becker photo)



Fr. Dernek added new lighting & ornamentation in 2005-06.

An account of the dedication liturgy, 1928: *St. Columbanus Church [is] a beautiful brick structure trimmed with stone, of Romanesque architecture ... The Bishop and assisting priests marched around the church on the outside, during which the celebrant recited the dedicatory prayers and sprinkled the walls with blessed water. Then, entering the building, the procession went directly to the [sanctuary], where the Litany of Saints was sung, the response being sung by the clergy, after which the procession again formed and encircled the interior of the edifice. Arriving again at the sanctuary, the dedication prayer was brought to a close.*

**ST. COLUMBANUS CHURCH – OUR PASTORS**



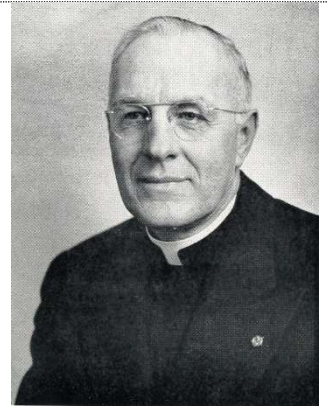
Fr. David L. Murray  
(1882-1920)



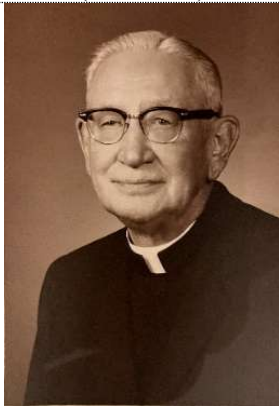
Fr. James V. Donovan  
(1922-43)



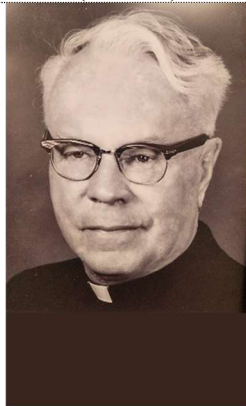
Fr. Sybanus E. Mulcahy  
(1944-50)



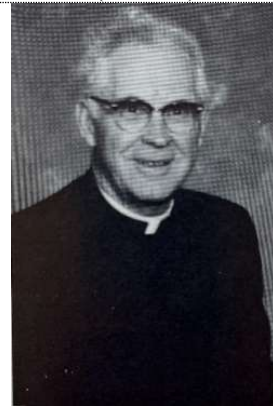
Fr. Peter S. Fafinski  
(1950-52)



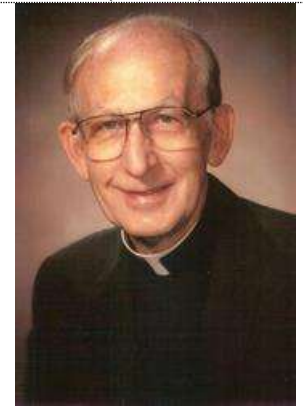
Fr. Herman A. Boecker  
(1952-67)



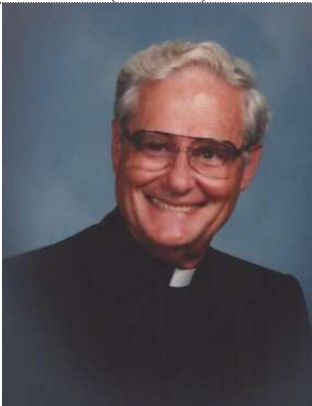
Fr. Patrick H. Russell  
(1967-68)



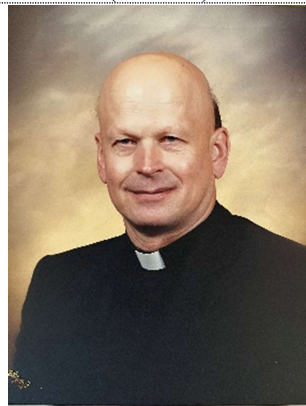
Fr. Hilary L. McNallan  
(1968-76)



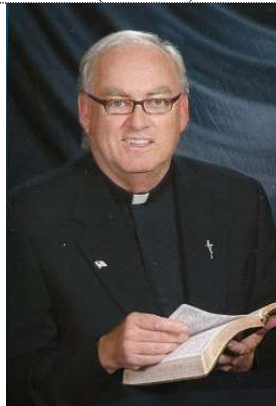
Fr. Lawrence P. Ginther  
(1976-83)



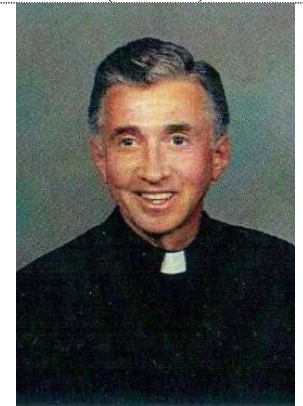
Fr. Paul F. Halloran  
(1983-91)



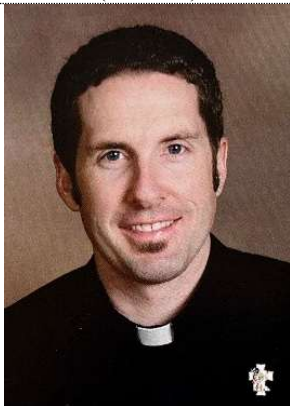
Fr. Richard J. Dernek  
(1991-2008)



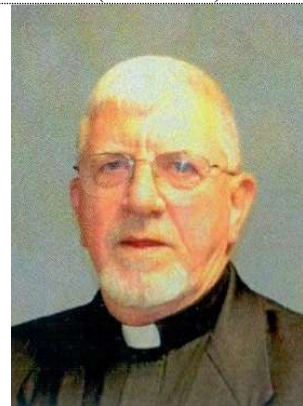
Fr. William J. Kulas  
(2008-12)



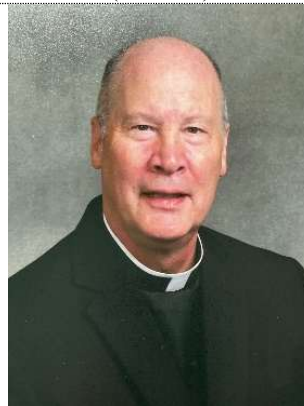
Fr. Steven J. Peterson  
(2012-15)



Fr. Thomas M. Niehaus  
(2015-19)



Fr. John P. Wilmot  
(2019-21)



Fr. William M. Becker  
(2022- )

**Interim Priests/Pastors**

- Fr. John J. Stapleton  
(1920-21)
- Fr. Arthur R. Doran  
(1921-22)
- Fr. James J. Glendon  
(1922)
- Fr. L.J. Gavin  
(1922)
- Fr. John M. Misiak  
(1943-44)

## ST. COLUMBANUS CHURCH – HISTORICAL TIMELINE

### Mission Era

- 1867 – First Mass is offered by Fr. Prendergast (of LaCrosse) in a construction shack near Blooming Prairie;  
Local Catholic society forms (about 30 families); Masses held in Thomas Feeney building (later a hardware store)
- 1867-82 – Local mission is served by priests from Faribault, Owatonna, or Austin: Frs. George Keller, William Hurley, Patrick McDermott, Francis Pribyl, Clement Scheve, Lawrence Wiesler, Paul Genis
- 1868 – First church is built under Fr. Keller of Faribault
- 1877 – Second church built under Fr. Pribyl of Sacred Heart, Owatonna (right next to current church); serves for 50 years

### Fr. Murray

- 1882 – Parish is incorporated, resident Pastor assigned: Fr. David Murray, who will serve nearly 40 years.  
Names parish for an Irish missionary, St. Columbanus. Also constructs St. Mary's Church, Geneva (1894).
- 1883 – Rectory purchased under Fr. Murray (was located on present catechetical school site)
- 1889 – Parish passes into new Diocese of Winona
- 1892 – The church bell is cast by McShane Foundry in Baltimore, and consecrated by Bishop Joseph Cotter
- 1893 – St. Columbanus Cemetery dedicated by Bishop Cotter under Fr. Murray
- 1920 – Fr. Murray retires (dies in Wabasha, 1922); various interim priests serve the parish until Fr. Donovan arrives (1922)

### Frs. Donovan & Boecker

- 1928 – Current church is dedicated on Sept. 9 by Bishop Francis Kelly, under Fr. Donovan
- 1953 – Sanctuary remodeled under Fr. Boecker; some stained glass windows installed, with the rest in 1955
- 1956 – New rectory is dedicated under Fr. Boecker; old one is moved from current school site to 111 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE
- 1961 – New catechetical school building dedicated under Fr. Boecker; final two classrooms remodeled in 1964
- 1964-65 – A free-standing altar is erected for Mass facing the people, and English is partly introduced;  
the new Mass rite follows in March 1970 (*novus ordo*)
- 1966 – Church is remodeled to reflect Vatican II norms, under Fr. Boecker; roof is replaced with slate shingles

### From Centennial to Centennial

- 1967 – Parish celebrates its centennial under Fr. Russell
- 1973-74 – New west narthex & entry constructed under Fr. McNallan
- 1981 – The church is repainted and a new altar installed under Fr. Ginther
- 1986 – Elevator installed in southwest entry under Fr. Halloran
- 1987-88 – The church is remodeled under Fr. Halloran, sanctuary is reshaped
- 2001-02 – Church is air conditioned under Fr. Dernek, and the bell-tower and west entry are capped
- 2005-06 – Church renovated with new lighting & ornamental painting under Fr. Dernek
- 2006 – St. Columbanus Rural Cemetery established under Fr. Dernek
- 2018-19 – East lot purchased & vacated, parking lot installed under Fr. Niehaus
- 2028 – Parish celebrates centennial of dedication of the current St. Columbanus Church structure

### **Our Parish Cluster (since 1980)**

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1983-97   | St. Columbanus clusters with St. Mary's, Geneva                                       |
| 1997-     | St. Columbanus clusters with Sacred Heart, Hayfield                                   |
| 2016      | St. Columbanus merges with St. Mary's Geneva  |
| 2016-2019 | St. Columbanus & Sacred Heart cluster with St. John Baptist de la Salle, Dodge Center |
| 2019-     | St. Columbanus & Sacred Heart cluster with Holy Trinity, Litomysl                     |

*Updated 2025-09-01*