

St. John's Church Chronology

Pastors

- Rev. James Fitton 1834 – 1843
- Rev. Adolphus Williamson 1843 – 1845
- Rev. Matthew W. Gibson 1845 – 1856
- Rev. John Boyce 1856 – 1864
- Most Rev. Patrick T. O'Reilly, D.D. 1864 – 1885
- Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas Griffin, D.D. P.R. 1885 – 1910
- Rev. Thomas S. Donohue, P.R. 1911 – 1922
- Rev. Edward J. Fitzgerald, P.R. 1923 – 1937
- Rev. John F. McDonnell, P.R. 1937 – 1944
- Rev. Michael E. Lahey, P.R. 1944 – 1953
- Rev. John Donohue 1954 – 1963
- Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. O'Brien 1964 – 1967
- Rev. James B. Kelly (Priest-in-charge) 1967 –1971
- Most Rev. Timothy J. Harrington* 1969 – 1972
- Rev. William W. McGovern (administrator) 1971 – 1972
- Rev. Cyril A. LeBeau 1972 – 1977
- Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Scollen (administrator) 1977 – 1982; (pastorate) 1983–1984
- Rev. Michael G. Foley 1984 – 1991
- Rev. Charles F. Monroe 1991 – 1994
- Rev. Joseph A. Coonan** 1994 – 2008
- Rev. John F. Madden 2004 – present

Notes

* Bishop Harrington was in residence from 1969–1972, and not the pastor.

** Fr. Coonan was placed on administrative leave, then on medical leave. Fr. Madden has actually been running the parish since 2004.

Patrick W. Ford, Architect

Patrick W. Ford (1847–1900) was an Irish-American architect who, along with Patrick C. Keely of Brooklyn and James Murphy of Providence, RI designed almost all of the Roman Catholic churches built in the eastern part of United States through the latter half of the 19th century. Born in Ballincollig, Ireland, and educated at Queen's College Cork, Ford emigrated to the United States in the 1860s. He lived for a time in New York where he may have worked in the office of Patrick C. Keely and then went to work for architects E. Boyden & Son in Worcester, MA.

Patrick Ford opened his own practice in Boston, MA, in 1872. He was widely recognized as an authority on church architecture and his practice focused primarily on designing churches and institutional buildings for the Roman Catholic Church in New England. Ford died suddenly at age 52 in August 1900.

Architecture

The church is constructed like a Baptist or Puritan church, so that visitors may think that the building is a Protestant church. The current steeple has been in place since 1951. The brick walls have been in place since the beginning in 1846.

The interior walls have been repainted several times, most recently in 2005. The congregation has 50 rows of 4 pews (total lower seating 1,000), including a handicapped section. There are another thousand pews in a balcony on both sides of the nave, including 500 people per side. The total capacity is 2,000 persons and 100 musicians.

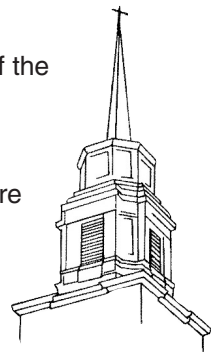
In the sanctuary, the high altar is located in the center, with the Blessed Sacrament located behind it. The original Tridentine Mass altar houses the tabernacle, and is in Romanesque style. The pulpit is to the left of the altar and the presider's chair at the right. To the direct left, a devotional shrine is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and often other statues, such as of St. Francis Xavier and St. Theresa, may be displayed. The baptistry dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary is at the direct right. The flooring is hardwood.

St. John's New Lower Church

The sanctuary is an elegant mission revival design with a replica of the altar and sanctuary at the Church of the Good Sheperd of Beverly Hills, California. The focus is on the Blessed Sacrament with recessed lighting for the crucifix on white tile.

Illuminated stain glass windows are on each side of the altar including a wireless dimmer switch for the entire Blessed Sacrament and crucifix.

A mass of dedication to the new Lower Church was held on May 27, 2015. The Renovation of this chapel was made possible by a gift from Mrs. Mary M. Carroll, a parishioner of this parish.



Milestones – St. John’s Church

44 Temple Street, Worcester, MA

- 1826** The first recorded Mass was celebrated by Boston’s Bishop J. Fenwick at the United States Arms Tavern near Lincoln Square, Worcester.
 - 1828** Blackstone Canal opens. Fr. Woodley begins to visit Worcester.
 - 1833** Robert Laverty petitions Bishop Benedict Fenwick for a priest in Worcester.
 - 1834** Foundation of Christ Church (St. John’s) laid. Bishop Fenwick appoints Rev. James Fitton first Pastor.
 - 1835** Christ Church completed (St. John’s). Boston to Worcester Railroad opens.
 - 1836** Father Fitton transfers his headquarters to Worcester. Penobscot Indians begin to make annual visits to St. John’s Parish, camping on Vernon Hill before returning to Maine.
 - 1837** Father Fitton establishes two schools: one for children at the Church, and one for older boys located on Pakachoag Hill called ‘Mount Saint James Seminary.’
 - 1843** Cornerstone of future world-famed College of the Holy Cross laid on June 21.
 - 1845** Foundation laid for “new” and present St. John’s Church Rev. Matthew W. Gibson named Pastor.
 - 1846** June 29 - Church completed and dedicated at St. John’s.
 - 1847** Ladies Sewing Society formed; Mutual Relief Society formed (forerunners of the St. Vincent de Paul Societies).
 - 1848** Worcester incorporated as a city. Blackstone Canal closes.
 - 1852** College of the Holy Cross burns to the ground.
 - 1856** Rev. John Boyce named Pastor of St. John’s.
 - 1864** Fr. Boyce dies, succeeded by Rev. Patrick T. O’Reilly.
 - 1865** Presbytery constructed (rectory).
 - 1870** Diocese of Springfield established. Fr. O’Reilly named as first Bishop. Msgr. Thomas Griffin named Pastor of St. John’s. St. John’s serves as chancery of the new diocese.
 - 1872** Sisters of Notre Dame arrive at Msgr. Griffin’s invitation to open a school for girls (Ascension).
 - 1879** St. John’s Parish is one of the original charters of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.
 - 1881** School for boys established (St. John’s High School).
 - 1884** St. John’s Church renovated (sacristy enlarged).
 - 1885** Bishop O’Reilly leaves St. John’s.
 - 1893** Sisters of Providence are invited by Msgr. Griffin to found a Catholic Hospital (St. Vincent Hospital).
 - 1894** Four Xaverian Brothers arrive in Worcester to teach at St. John’s boys parochial school.
 - 1896** St. John’s renovated (side galleries added, stained glass windows replace original windows).
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1846

1896 St. John's Parish celebrates its fiftieth anniversary.

1898 Xaverian Brothers open St. John's High School.

1910 St. John's Parish serves 15,000 parishioners.

1911 St. John's Parish divided (Ascension Parish formed).

1923 The Rev. Edward J. Fitzgerald was appointed the eighth pastor of St. John's Church and a new era began for St. John's School, as well. New Regulations required all boys in the high school outside the parish to pay monthly tuition. Grammar school students paid less. Books were free. The Novena of Grace, given in honor of St. Francis Xavier and conducted from March 4th to 12th, was first instituted at St. John's in 1923. A new building was erected for the high school department. The roof was to serve as a roof garden for parish activities.

1940 Church spire rebuilt after being destroyed by lightning.

1954 Xaverian Brothers assume control of St. John's High School.

1962 St. John's High School moves to Shrewsbury, I-290 opens (residential area of St. John's Parish demolished).
Chronology – St. John's Church, 44 Temple Street, Worcester, MA.

2004 St. John's sustained significant damage when the interior ceiling of the Upper Church collapsed.

2005 Oct. 2 - St. John's Upper Church repairs completed and a Mass of Dedication of the New Church and Altar was celebrated.

2009 Sept. 26 - St. John's celebrates its 175th anniversary.

2010 St. John's High altar was restored to the original look of Patrick W. Ford's altar in 1834.

2011 Upper Church Stations of the Cross were restored to the original look of 1846.

2014 St. John's completed restoring the Upper Sanctuary with its Triptych, the front wall and side spaces to the way it looked in 1916 – based on a St. John's postcard used in 1916.

2015 May 27 - A formal Right of Dedication of the Altar was held in the newly renovated Lower Church in memory of Mrs. Mary M. Carroll, a parishioner of St. John's Parish.

