Sacred Heart Parish stands today as a monument to the faith, the generosity, dedication and sacrifices of the Polish Community of Ipswich, and the Priests who served the people of God during the past 75 years. Today's warm, devotional church, comfortable, well-appointed rectory, spacious, verdant, landscaped grounds are the result of a gradual planned growth down through the years. Today the parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish, in thanking God for His innumerable blessings can be justifiably proud of their accomplishments and those of their parents and grandparents.

What follows is a short and somewhat fragmentary history of the parish and its growth and progress during the last three quarters of a century. It must be admitted that it is a great deal easier to write about the material accomplishments of the parish, for
these are visible and tangible, whereas most of the spiritual achievements are known only to God.

The influx into Ipswich of Polish immigrants in the late 1800's and the early years of this century was part of the great European Immigration. Poles along with other ethnic groups of people yearned for a better life, and sought it in this land of freedom and opportunity. The Ipswich mills as well as employment on the large estates on the north shore beckoned to these hard working

Being deeply religious they sought solace and comfort in the Church. They attended Mass in St. Joseph's Church and availed themselves of the sacraments and the services of the priests of that Parish. The first recorded Polish baptism in St. Joseph's Church is that of a certain Nikodem Boduch, who was baptized on June 15, 1902.

The language barrier plus the absence of Polish religious customs enkindled in the Polish Community an intense desire for a church of their own and a Polish speaking priest, who could communicate with them in their mother tongue as well as share with them the religious traditions of the land of their birth.

During this time the St. Lawrence Literary Society was being organized as an educational and fraternal organization, in order to preserve and maintain the Polish language, the spirit and the old world customs. Some of the leaders of this organization and other prominent men in the Polish immigrant community, with the assistance and the guidance of Father John Chmielinski, pastor of Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish in South Boston, petitioned Archbishop John Williams for permission to organize a Polish Parish and to construct a church and a rectory.
When permission was granted a drive for funds was begun. An old Ipswich Savings Bank book in the parish archives, made out in the name of John J. Williams, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston, in Trust for Polish Church in Ipswich, already had a balance of $2,174.33 on May 25, 1907.

On June 3, 1907 Daniel and Jenny Safford generously sold a piece of land on Topsfield Road, to Archbishop John Williams, for only one dollar. Shortly thereafter the construction of the church and rectory began.

On March 6, 1908 Father John Chmielinski wrote the following to Archbishop William O'Connell who succeeded Archbishop Williams: I will say Mass in the new Polish Church in Ipswich on March 8, 1908. The name of the church will be Sacred Heart, and Reverend T. Charles Rye will be in charge of it.

Father Ryc was a native of South Boston who had studied for the Priesthood in Rome. He was ordained by Cardinal Respligi on October 28, 1906. He assumed the spiritual and material care of Sacred Heart Parish with less than two years in the priesthood.

On March 15, 1908 Archbishop O'Connell delegated Father John Chmielinski to formally dedicate the new church, and as of that date Sacred Heart Parish began to function as a bona fide parish of the Archdiocese of Boston.

In the parish baptismal register the first name listed is that of Ladislaus Mazur, baptized in the new church on June 6, 1908. The Marriage Register shows that the first couple to be married in the new church on May 17, 1908 were Michael Balenko and Emilia Tabaruti.

The first recorded confirmation ceremony took place on September 7, 1914. Auxiliary Bishop John Anderson was the confirming prelate. The late Mrs. Mary Kobos was the sponsor for the girls and young women, and the late Adam Przybyszewski was
the sponsor for the boys and young men. One hundred and eleven girls and women, and seventy-five boys and men were confirmed. Their ages ranged from twelve to thirty-nine.

The first recorded death in 1908 was that of a Jan Szczechowicz, who died on January 23rd of pneumonia. He was only fourteen days old. In those early years records indicate that infant mortality was very high.

On June 21, 1908 a mortgage was secured from the Union Institution for Savings, 216 Tremont Street in Boston, in the amount of $21,000. at 4% interest. It would take 37 years to pay off this mortgage.

On October 13, 1911 a bell was purchased for the church bell tower from the Meneely Bell Co. of Troy, New York for $350.00. On it is inscribed in the Polish language, the following words: "Given to the Church of the Most Sacred Heart in Ipswich - from the parishioners of Ipswich and Newburyport, 1911."

It is to be noted here that a segment of parishioners attending Sacred Heart Church came from Newburyport from the earliest days and participated fully in the life of the parish. The priests of this parish attended the sick and the shut-ins of that Polish community with the sacraments. Years later until about ten years ago Easter confessions were heard in the Immaculate Conception Church in Newburyport by the priests of this parish, and following the Polish custom, Easter tables were blessed. The services of this parish are no longer required to serve the second and third generation of Polish-Americans in Newburyport, but a strong bond of love and friendship still exists between these two communities.

On January 24, 1916 a pipe organ was purchased for the church for the sum of $1,650.00 from the Estey Organ Company, Brattleboro, Vermont. With constant attention and care this instrument has survived in good working condition, to the present day, and provides inspirational sacred music at all of our liturgical functions.

In 1916 four lots of land along Peabody Street were purchased by Father Rye for $1,100. from the Chellis Realty Company, as agents for the Hood Land Company of State Street, Boston.

On September 11, 1920, Mr. & Mrs. George H.W. Hayes generously sold a parcel of land to the parish for only one dollar and thus the parish property continued to grow.

On December 24, 1932 a native son of this parish was ordained a priest in the Chapel of Saint John's Seminary, Brighton. God blessed and favored this parish by calling one of its own young men to labor in the vineyard of his divine Son. December 25, 1932 was a day of great joy for the parish as Father John Missa celebrated his first solemn high Mass in the presence of his family and parishioners. Subsequently Father Missa was raised to the Dignity of a Monsignor in 1966, and for many years he has been serving the people of God in Our Lady of Ostrabrama Parish Brockton.
On May 11, 1923 through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Protazy Missa, the parents of Father John, a parcel of land was acquired from them for one dollar, which was gratefully accepted by Father Rye.

On February 3, 1924 Father Rye was forced to take a leave of absence because of continued ill health. He was replaced for one year by Father John Dronzek, who continued the dedicated service of Father Ryc and held the parish together until April 8, 1925 when Father Rye was well enough to resume work as the pastor of the parish. Father Dronzek was transferred to St. Michael's Parish, Lynn where he subsequently became its pastor. He died on August 20, 1955.

In 1933 Father Rye, after twenty-five years as the spiritual leader of Sacred Heart Parish was transferred to Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish in South Boston. He served the Ipswich Parish during its most trying days. He organized and nurtured the parish when circumstances precluded any great financial support from parishioners, who were themselves struggling to support their families. He was pastor during the great depression when bad times became worse. But he persevered and established a firm foundation on which future pastors were to build. To honor the first pastor of the Polish people of Ipswich, a playground was named after him in the Polish section of town. From South Boston Father Rye was transferred to Holy Trinity Parish in Lowell. He died on October 19, 1936 at the age of 53.

With the departure of Father Rye from Ipswich, Father Peter Bartula, a young, energetic priest was assigned to Sacred Heart Parish. He was here but a short time, less than a year and then was assigned to Our Lady of Czestochowa parish in South Boston in 1935.

On June 10, 1935 Father Ladislaus Ciesinski was appointed administrator of Sacred Heart Parish. He set about immediately making necessary improvements to the parish property. He had the unfinished cellar of the church transformed into a much needed function hall.

On March 4, 1934 the Holy Rosary Society, active and very supportive of parish activities from the earliest days, formally drew up a constitution and established a set of rules and regulations for this women's organization. In 1934, the Kosciusko Club, a local Social and Fraternal Organization, in the Polish Community was incorporated.

In 1935 the young ladies of the parish were organized into the St. Mary's Sodality, a group that was active not only in religious programs, but also participated in sports, drama and social events of various kinds.

During Father Ciesinski's tenure new side altars were erected, a new boiler was installed, new Church doors were hung, and the beautiful, inspirational stained glass windows were acquired to enhance the devotional atmosphere of the church.

In April of 1940 Father Ciesinski was transferred to St. John the Baptist Parish in Salem, where he remained for less than a year. Succeeding him in Ipswich was Father Edward Naguszewski who carried on the spiritual and administrative duties of the parish.
He showed a particular interest in a sports program, which he set about organizing among
the young men of the parish. After his short stay in this parish, Father Naguszewski was
transferred to St. Adalbert's parish in Hyde Park as Pastor, and later to Holy Trinity Parish
in Lowell from where he retired from the active priesthood.

In November of 1940, Father Ciesinski was reassigned to Sacred Heart Parish. The
Second World War was looming on the horizon, and with the involvement of the United
States, 185 young men and women answered their country's call. The parish began a Polish
Boys In The Service Fund. This grew rapidly. Records show that as much as $4,000.00
were raised, and helped the servicemen and women in various ways.

The first parish casualty was Fabian Weltchek United States Army, who lost his life
at Luzon in the Philippine Islands on February 13, 1945. In his memory local Post 92 of the
Polish Legion of American Veterans was named the Fabian Weltchek Post when it was
established in 1947.

In 1946 with the cessation of hostilities 165 veterans took part in a memorial Mass
of thanksgiving in Sacred Heart Church. This was followed by a banquet honoring these
veterans, and each received an appropriate gift from a grateful parish.

Father Ciesinski continued to serve Sacred Heart Parish with administrative skill. It
was while he was pastor that the parish debt was finally liquidated. In 1955 on the death of
Father John Dronzek, Father Ciesinski was called to the pastorate of St. Michael's Parish
in Lynn, after having served this parish for nineteen years. He died on September 2,1971.

Father Francis Dombrowski assumed the pastorate of Sacred Heart Parish, but he
suffered bouts of illness and in 1956 he was compelled to resign. He retired to his family
home in Pennsylvania, where he later died.

Father Chester Stempkowski then came to Sacred Heart. He was formally installed
as Pastor on September 27, 1956. With the energy of a young priest, dedicated to his
church and his people, he set about dutifully fulfilling his obligations as a pastor. He
organized the Holy Name Society and took an active interest in its work. His Holy Name
men began to sponsor the Communion Breakfasts for the First Communicants. He in-
itiated the excursions to Canobie Lake Park for the altar boys and CCD pupils, which is
annual event to the present day, eagerly awaited by the children.

In 1958 the Parish observed its Golden Jubilee. Richard Cardinal Cushing celebrated
a Pontifical High Mass of Thanksgiving. The anniversary banquet followed in the Church
Hall attended by a score of Priests and town officials.

In September 1959 Father Stempkowski purchased a large parcel of land along
Topsfield Road and Hayward Street from the Eva Peatfield Estate for $3,500.00, and
another adjoining parcel from Mr. Gaston Nadeau for $2,200.00. These transactions
completed the acquisition of land surrounding the Church and Rectory.

In 1960 the Grotto of the Sacred Heart on the church grounds was constructed, a gift
from the Waranowski family in memory of Antoni Waranowski.
In 1961 the parking lot was filled and leveled and then hot topped. Then with the able assistance of some of the handy, generous men of the parish, and under professional supervision, the two car garage was built.

A two story addition to the rectory was constructed making it more spacious and comfortable. These and many other improvements were made to the parish property. Father Stempkowski proved himself to be an able administrator with foresight, and a genuine pastor of souls. His accomplishments were many and he was sorely missed when he left to assume the pastorate of St. Michael's Parish in Lynn. On November 14, 1978, after a short illness, Father Chester Stempkowski died.

Succeeding Father Stempkowski at Sacred Heart was the present Pastor, Father Joseph Lukas, who came to his first pastorate in Ipswich, from Holy Trinity Parish in Lowell, on January 19, 1971. His energetic and dedicated predecessors, each in his own way, had left their mark on the parish. Sufficient funds were not available to accomplish everything. Many more improvements were necessary.

With the help and cooperation of the men of the Holy Name Society small Beano Games were initiated. The weekly revenue at first was very modest, but as time went on the proceeds grew. Five groups of women parishioners joined the men Beano workers in baking pastries and working at the refreshment table, thus bringing in more revenue.

Father Lukas began a monthly collection and an annual fuel collection to defray the cost of heating the Parish buildings. The Parish Picnic, which was held annually over the years in various locations in town, began to be held on the spacious church grounds as of July 16, 1972. This Parish fund raising activity has become one of the most popular ethnic, summer events on the North Shore, drawing thousands of guests to the parish grounds annually.

The planning and the preparation of this huge affair call for a great deal of work on the part of a host of willing parishioners who have made this successful Polish Picnic the annual highlight of their parish activities.

In the fall of 1974 the interior of the church was painted and decorated, the sanctuary was enlarged by removing a portion of the altar rail, and carpeting was installed throughout the church.

The Lighting fixtures in the hall were inadequate. These were replaced by florescent tubes on a white acoustical tile ceiling. The hall was painted. The kitchen was enlarged and equipped with a restaurant type stove and exhaust system. A new furnace was installed, two modern tiled rest rooms were built and the hall foyer was paneled. Again the willing and skillful hands of some of the men of the parish helped reduce the cost of the entire project.

An automatic carillon was donated to the church, in memory of John Dziadose, by his wife. This electronic apparatus rings out the Angelus daily, summons the faithful to church on Sundays and fills the neighborhood with religious hymns emanating from the
church tower. The crosses on the church were replaced with new gold leafed symbols of our faith.

The rectory was in need of some repair and modernization. Brick steps were built and a new roof was put on. A modern cabinet kitchen was installed as well as two modern bathrooms. The entire rectory was carpeted and refurbished.

Fr. T. Charles Ryc              Fr. John Dronzek              Fr. Ladislaus Ciesinski

The year 1979 was a very special year for the parish. The parishioners witnessed two first Masses celebrated by two newly ordained priests. On May 6, 1979 the second native son of Sacred Heart Parish, Father John Swencki, was ordained in the chapel of St. John's Seminary. He concelebrated his first Mass on May 13 and brought much joy to his family, parishioners and friends.

Fr. Edward Naguszewski    Fr. Chester Stempkowski
On May 19, 1979 Father Benjamin Gorr was ordained in St. Jude's Cathedral, St. Petersburg, Florida. Father Gorr, though not an Ipswich native, nevertheless was a long time active parishioner of Sacred Heart Parish. His was a delayed vocation and it was rather unique in that Father Gorr is a widower. Father Gorr celebrated his first Mass in Sacred Heart Parish on June 3, 1979.

Vocations to the Priesthood have never been too numerous, so Sacred Heart Parish can consider itself thrice blessed by God, for the three priests who are now serving God and his Church, had the seeds of their vocation sown in our Church and in our parish community.

Over the years death claimed most of the original, immigrant members of the parish, those stalwart souls, who in spite of many deprivations, laid the foundation of Sacred Heart Parish. Their ranks were filled with the first generation of Polish-Americans who were nurtured by God-loving, God-fearing Polish parents. So, the Parish has preserved its Polish identity and flavor. Most of the Polish customs and traditions are passed down from one generation to the next.

In our church the word of God is still heard in the Polish language and the old world Polish hymns are sung. During the Lenten season the meaningful and poignant "Gorzkie Zale" are sung and the Way of the Cross is conducted in the Polish language. At Easter time tables are still blessed in the homes of the parishioners, and the early morning Resurrection Mass is preceded by the traditional Easter procession in which all of the Parish Societies, as well as the members of the local Polish Organizations, take part.

Families continue to observe the "Wigilia" supper and oplatki are always available during the Christmas season. The Christmas observance begins with the "Pasterka" and the traditional procession to the Crib and the singing of the "Kolendy." During this holy season the Parish Family Supper, the "Oplatek" is held, and is well attended by parents and their children, who share the symbol of love, and oneness, the oplatek. The senior choir takes part annually in the Polish Choir conventions, and takes its turn in hosting this annual, musical gathering.

Concern for our beleaguered relatives in Poland is manifested by the loving and caring Parishioners. During the recent crisis in Poland hundreds of pounds of clothing, shoes, food and medicine were collected to help alleviate the suffering in that distressed nation.

As the Jubilee year began, the Diamond Jubilee Committee decided that the celebration begin with a Parish Retreat. During the Lenten season a Retreat was conducted by Father Sylvester Makarewicz O.F.M. for the adults of the Parish, with special afternoon services for the children. During this retreat week, an exhibit of old parish photographs was on display in the church hall. This proved to be a big attraction, awaking memories in the older parishioners and proving to be an education for the younger members of the parish.
On a Saturday evening, following Easter, a special Polka Mass was celebrated in our Church. This proved to be a new and fascinating and moving experience for many of our parishioners. The evening continued with a Polka Dance in nearby St. Lawrence Hall.

The Committee decided that this important occasion merited a keepsake souvenir book. With the splendid cooperation of so many of our parishioners and the very generous response of the business community of Ipswich and surrounding towns, we are able to produce this publication.

The Diamond Jubilee Parish Picnic was held on August 7th on our church grounds. Once again the parishioners played host to hundreds of guests from near and far, and the Picnic was a social and a financial success.

The festivities of the Jubilee year were prayerfully brought to a close with a special concelebrated Pontifical Mass. His Excellency Bishop John J. Mulcahy, our regional Bishop was the principal celebrant and homilist.

The Mass was followed by a Dinner and Dance at the Danversport Yacht Club. There in beautiful surroundings, appropriate for such an occasion, a large gathering of parishioners and friends, with their Pastor, Father Lukas and guest priests, gave vent to their feelings of joy and happiness as the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee was brought to a glorious end.

As we gaze back upon the accomplishments of the founders of Sacred Heart Parish, and the fond memories of those 75 years that all too quickly passed, we need to look toward the years that are still to come, and prayerfully fill our hearts with a firm determination that we too will live in the traditions we have inherited from our forebears.

We can only hope that after our years of fidelity to God and to His church, a future generation of parishioners will look with satisfaction upon our achievements as we look back gratefully upon the men and women of the past who had a firm faith in God and an ardent love for His Church.

WIKIPEDIA

Sacred Heart Parish - designated for Polish immigrants in Ipswich, Massachusetts, United States.

Founded 1908. It was one of the Polish-American Roman Catholic parishes in New England in the Archdiocese of Boston.

The parish closed April 25, 1999. The building retains the original structure, but the inside has been converted into luxury apartments.
Our Lady of Hope Parish was founded on July 1, 1997 out of the three former parishes in Ipswich: St. Joseph’s Parish, Sacred Heart Parish, and St. Stanislaus Parish. St. Joseph’s Parish had celebrated its centennial in 1989. Sacred Heart Church was dedicated in 1908. St. Stanislaus Church was completed in 1912.

Priest Ordained from Sacred Heart Parish