

On March 1, 1948 the Most Reverend George L. Leech, Bishop of Harrisburg, established the Parish of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque to serve the overflowing Catholic community of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Father Francis A. Kirchner, then the assistant at Saint Patrick Cathedral, was appointed as pastor and celebrated the first Mass on March 7, 1948 in the Studebaker Automobile Show Room owned by parishioner Paul Camplese. Throughout 1948 and 1949 the parish raised funds for the original church. On October 29, 1949 Bishop Leech celebrated the first Mass in the church on Herr Street. With committed leadership from its pastors, the parish expanded its focus to education, establishing the parochial school 1958. The School, Convent and Chapel were staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame from 1949-1985. In response to a shortage of diocesan priests, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were invited to serve the parish from 1970-1995. The parish has grown from serving 350 families when formed, to today's membership of 1500 households.

St. Margaret Mary's original church was located in on the southernmost boundary of the parish's geographical territory. The original church had limited seating and inadequate parking and the property is landlocked, preventing the type of new construction and expansion required to support a vibrant and growing parish. To address the existing needs and accommodate the expected population growth in the area, the Diocese of Harrisburg and St. Margaret Mary Parish responded with a new church and plans for athletic, social and multi-purpose activity space—amenities that are deeply needed for a thriving parish and academically competitive school. The new church is located on a spacious 19 acres at the northwest corner of Paxton Church and Crums Mill Roads, straddling Susquehanna and Lower Paxton Townships.

The new church was planned with extensive input by the parishioners of St. Margaret Mary; it reflects their desire for traditional styling and incorporates current needs and amenities. The design of the new church is Romanesque. The interior is 14,240 square feet, with a seating capacity of 800 and design features to accommodate two 120-seat additions, finishing the transept characteristics of a traditional church. It features a meeting room, bride's room, children's room, priest's sacristy, church sacristy, two confessionals, shrines, and is fully accessible for people with mobility impairments.

The groundbreaking for the new church occurred on April 22, 2009. Construction was completed and the new church was dedicated on April 10, 2010. The new rectory was completed in the fall of 2010. We have been blessed throughout our history with dedicated priests, religious, lay ministers and parishioners and significant growth which led to the construction of a beautiful new church dedicated by Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades on Saturday, April 10, 2010.

The parish now spans two campuses: a centrally located site at 2800 Paxton Church Road with a large church on the Susquehanna/Lower Paxton Township border; and the Penbrook campus at 2848 Herr Street with enhancements that will allow for a multi-purpose facility attached to the school. The new spacious, geographically central location of the larger church, together with the renovated gymnasium and fellowship space, allows for the parish's growth and viability to serve families, students and faith community well into the future.