

## HISTORY of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI/INFANT JESUS of PRAGUE

St. Francis of Assisi began in 1961 with Father Charles Reiner, O.S.B., Gladys Mitchell and six Catholic families. They met in homes or attended Mass in Corinth or Saltillo. Eventually, the Infant Jesus of Prague Catholic Church was built four miles south of town. The dedication services were held on Sunday, April 29, 1962.

The Church began to grow as more families moved to the Booneville area. The Fulper family started a dairy farm. The Buchberger family established Marathon Cheese. The Lawyer family came here with American Seating, which later became Schweiger's Furniture.

In 1967, Sacred Heart Southern Missions of Walls, MS. took on the responsibility of serving the spiritual and financial needs of the nine counties in northeast Mississippi. Prentiss County was served by Sacred Heart Southern Missions until 2009.

Father George Pinger, S.C.J., became the first full-time priest in 1977. Father Pinger made his home in the back of the Church. Eventually a house was purchased at 200 Washington St. This now serves as our Parish House.

In 1987, due to the shortage of priests, Sisters from religious communities began doing the day-to-day duties with a priest coming for the celebration of the Mass and Sacraments on Sundays.

In the fall of 1992, plans were made for a new church. Land was purchased on College Street across from Northeast Community College. At the direction of the Bishop, this was to be the location of the Catholic Church and Catholic Student Center.

This second Church was made possible by Sacred Heart Southern Missions, a grant from Marathon Cheese in Wisconsin, and contributions both financially and through service by parishioners. The congregation moved to the new church facility in December 1993, and a beautiful dedication ceremony took place on April 10, 1994. The new church was named St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church.

Father Tom Burns, S.C.J. served as Sacramental Minister from July of 1993 until his retirement in March of 2009. Upon Father Tom's retirement, Father Richard Smith joined us as our new Sacramental Minister. Sister Colette Fahrner, S.L.W., Sister of the Living Word,

arrived in July, 2006 as our new Lay Ecclesial Minister. She took the place of Sister Dorothy Pashuta, who was with us for nine years. In 2010, Sheila Przesmicki became our Pastoral Minister. In 2014, she was appointed Lay Ecclesial Minister, and Father David Szatkowski, S.C.J. was appointed Sacramental Minister.

Church membership continues to steadily grow and members of the congregation are proud of caring for the present Church, Social Hall and grounds.

We dedicate our Infant Jesus of Prague Memory wall to Ludie Pietruszkiewicz, a convert to Catholicism who joined Infant Jesus of Prague, along with her family, in the 1960's. Ludie was one of the many people who served in several ministries in the church, and after St. Francis of Assisi was dedicated in 1994, she wanted to ensure that Infant Jesus of Prague was not forgotten. Especially in an area where Catholics continue to be a minority, Ludie wanted very much to preserve HOW the Catholic Church came to Prentiss County, and how hard those first families worked to maintain a Catholic presence here.

We lost Ludie in February of 2012, but her memory and presence lives on in the prayers, work and mission we maintain here at the parish of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church and Student Center. We have been richly blessed and ask you to join us in thanking God for graces received through all these years.

*We, the members of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Booneville, Mississippi, commit ourselves to becoming a more prayerful, collaborative and welcoming community that fosters ongoing spiritual growth by:*

- ◆ Cooperating with other groups to improve the quality of life in our community;
- ◆ Continuing religious education, prayer, and sharing;
- ◆ Growing in appreciation of each other by sharing fun times;
- ◆ Contributing time, talent and treasure to support the work of the church;
- ◆ Preparing and participating in meaningful, dynamic liturgical celebrations;
- ◆ Reaching beyond our parish community in response to the needy within our civic community and the world.