

## St Gabriel's Church



It's affectionately known as "The Little White Church" or "St. Gabriel's Chapel". But it wasn't always like this.

In the early days of the Sandhills, the cottagers gathered under a simple wooden cross placed in the sand. Capuchin priests from the Franciscan parish of St Francois D'Assise on Wellington Street in Ottawa were transported out to the beach where they offered up Sunday services for all in attendance.



In 1945, Father Reynolds, of Fitzroy Harbour, was approached with the idea of building a small chapel.

Convinced by the sincerity of the people, Father Reynolds wrote to the Archbishop of Ottawa in December of that year requesting approval for the project: *"of the 500 residents about 75 are Catholic... they have started a movement for the erection of a small chapel to be serviced for three months during the summer... they are under the impression that they can secure sufficient funds from their numbers to build the chapel."*

The Archbishops issued the permit and, by the summer of 1946 plans were underway.

On July 2 an agreement was made with Fred Baldwin to purchase a piece of land for the sum of \$250. One week later Patrick Smith of Woodlawn undertook a "contract to erect on this plot of ground a chapel, according to the plan already drawn up, for the sum of \$3,200.00."

It was a simple wooden frame structure that measured 30 x 40 raised above the ground on cottage type piers. A small wooden cross was mounted on the roof over the front door.

The Stations of the cross were donated by Father Reynolds mother and were blessed on September 23, 1947.

Sadly, within two years the little chapel was consumed by one of the many grass fires that plagued the area during the hot summer months. Father Reynolds and his congregation went right to work building another one.



**Fr. Joseph Welch 1951-55**



**Fr. Francis French 1955-59**



**Fr. Orloff Dorion 1959-63**

All indications suggest that everything was going well and in 1959 Father Dorion came to the conclusion that an addition was necessary and soon work was underway to add 1500 square feet to the rear of the existing chapel.

In February of 1960, the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation decided that a second lot would be required and Fred and Flossie Baldwin sold the lot to the church for \$1.00.

Early in May 1960, the final touches were being applied to the new structure. That evening, the weary parishiners packed up their tools and went home. By the next morning there was nothing left but smoldering coals and ashes. Somehow a fire had started which quickly destroyed the little chapel for the second time.

From the morning of the fire, Father Dorion was undaunted and went to work with plans for a new chapel. Coady Construction was awarded the contract for \$24,000 and the parishiners again made numerous donations in order to get the chapel back up and running. During construction, mass was held at the Casino.



**Fr. Victor Skilandziunas 1963-66**



**Fr. David Corkery 1966-69**

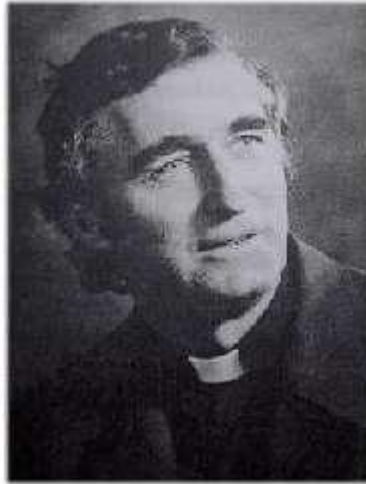


**Fr. Lenonard Lunney 1969-71**

From 1963 to 1971 both the Catholic Church and St Gabriel's saw major changes. The language of the mass was changed from Latin to English and St Gabriel's held it's first Social in 1970. These Socials became so popular that they were spread out over three days. 1970 marked the first year that the little chapel was kept open through the winter.



Fr. Fred Miller 1971-74



Fr. William Lunney 1974-1992



Fr. Daryl Kennedy 1992-95

From 1971 to 1995 St Gabriels' was under construction with much of the work being done by D'Angelo construction.

A new roof, insulation and a fresh paint job complimented the planting of trees, shrubs and flowers.

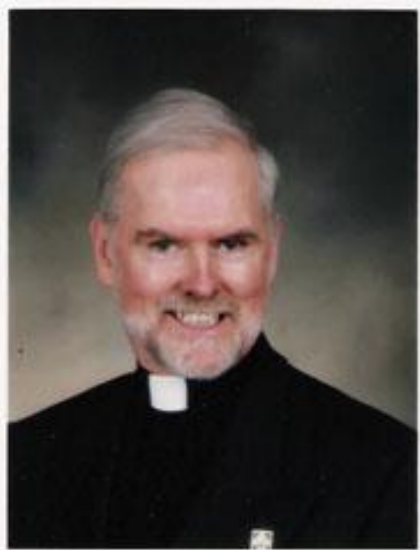
It was during this period that Father William Lunney came to St Gabriel's. He was the brother of Father Leonard. Father Bill stayed for 18 years.



The picture at left was taken around 1975. At the left you can just make out the giant Norway Poplars that lined the walkway down to Bayview Drive. Sadly, they were removed during renovations in 1988.



**In 1995 Father William Penney came to St Gabriel's. Father Bill, as he was affectionately known, was a native of Newfoundland and brought new life to the church. His effervescent personality brought great warmth and a sense of hospitality to the church and the community.**



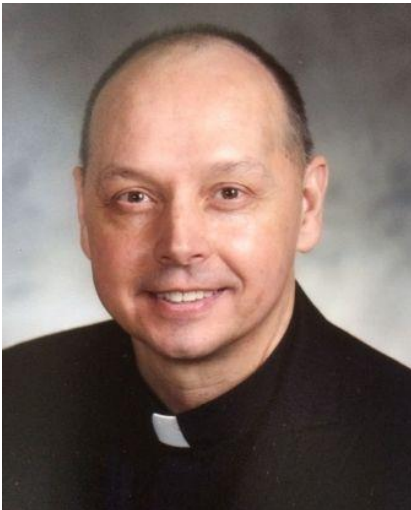
**In 1999, Father Leonard St. John came to the Little white chapel in the Bay. He stayed with us until July 2005 – when he was reassigned to St. George's Parish in Ottawa.**



**In July 2005 Father Glicerio Jimenez joined us and remained until 1 August 2011.**



**On October 30, 2011 Father Michael Ruddick joined us and remained until 2 December 2018.**



**On 19<sup>th</sup> May 2019 Father John Orban joined us.**