

St. Patrick's, Cheektowaga

What are some significant moments in the history of your church that have shaped its identity today?

One of the most significant moments in the history of our church came in May 1974, when our parish hall burned down. The cost to repair it was estimated at more than \$300,000, and the diocese told us they could not provide financial help. At that moment, our priest, Fr. Abuid Sam, suggested that the congregation build it themselves. The materials would cost \$90,000, and in just two weeks, the people of St. Patrick's raised \$70,000. On St. Patrick's Day in 1975, we broke ground, and in the



months that followed, parishioners worked side by side to build the new hall. That experience not only gave us a new building, but also created a bond within our church family that has never broken. It was a powerful lesson in determination, faith, and what can be accomplished when God's people come together.

Another defining moment came in 2017, when our basement flooded. Membership was declining, and funds were scarce, but once again, the people of St. Patrick's chose faith and perseverance. We took the project one step at a time, completing repairs as money became available. Along the way, blessings appeared: one of our largest expenses—the ceiling—was donated through the generosity of a Boy Scout dad. The ceiling came from a local school district, materials for the lights were donated by UB, and as a trained electrician, he rewired and installed the new lights along with the ceiling as part of his Wood Badge project. The project is not yet complete, but we are looking forward to celebrating its completion in the next few months.

Moments like these—when challenges could have divided us, but instead drew us closer—have shaped St. Patrick's into the church we are today: faithful, resilient, and bound together in Christ's love.

What makes your church unique in the region and the diocese?

What makes St. Patrick's unique in the region and in the diocese is that, while we may be small in number, we are mighty in spirit. Our size gives us a close-knit, family feel where everyone matters and every voice is heard. We are known for our resilience, our willingness to work together, and our deep faith that God will provide. That spirit of determination and community makes St. Patrick's a strong and joyful presence in the diocese.

What are the most vibrant ministries or strengths of your parish today?

Some of the most vibrant ministries and strengths of St. Patrick's today are the ways we serve our community and the ways we care for one another. We were part of the

inaugural year of YUMs (Youth United in Ministry), which allowed our young people to build friendships and share ministry with others in the diocese. Our parish is also deeply committed to outreach: we regularly collect food for FeedMore WNY, with our most recent drive bringing in 369 pounds of food, and we recently partnered with Beyond Learning, a center that provides educational and therapeutic services for children with disabilities, down the street to help rebuild their library through a parish book drive.

Another great strength of St. Patrick's is our fellowship. We love being together, whether it's potlucks, baking days, or parish events. Food and hospitality are among our greatest strengths, giving us opportunities to grow closer as a parish family and to welcome others into our fellowship.

Describe a moment in your community's life when you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit moving among you. What made that moment possible?

One moment when we truly felt the presence of the Holy Spirit was on November 23rd, 2024, during our homecoming dinner. Past priest Fr. Abuid Sam shared stories and memories of his time at St. Patrick's, and many familiar faces returned to join us for a meal. The room was filled with laughter, shared memories, and genuine connection. This moment was made possible by the people of St. Patrick's—their openness, warmth, and willingness to come together to celebrate our church and community. In that gathering, we could feel God's Spirit moving through the fellowship, love, and gratitude of our parish family.

How does your church engage with the local neighborhood, the civic life of your community, or diocesan and/or Episcopal Church-wide initiatives?

St. Patrick's engages our community through service, outreach, and hospitality. We host events like our first Free Hot Dog Roast to thank neighbors for their support, organize food drives for FeedMore WNY, and partner with Beyond Learning to help rebuild their library. Our doors are always open, welcoming a lively mix of community groups—from BSA troops and Girl Scouts to TOPS weight-loss meetings, Rebekahs/Odd Fellows, aerobics classes, and even the Erie County Board of Elections. With the building alive almost every day, St. Patrick's has become a place where neighbors connect, support one another, and feel at home.



What are the hopes and dreams of your congregation for its next chapter?

St. Patrick's hopes to continue growing spiritually, welcoming new members, and sharing our faith with the wider community. We also aim to strengthen our outreach and remain a close-knit, caring parish where God's love is at the center of all we do.