

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Wattle Park

Surrey Hills Wattle Park Parish was created in 2017 with the amalgamation of Our Holy Redeemer and Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Churches in Surrey Hills.

History

In 1952, the property at the corner of Bentley and Erasmus Streets was purchased by Fr Timothy Fitzpatrick, Parish Priest of Our Holy Redeemer Parish, Surrey Hills. This property consisted of a large two storey house, a coach house and stable, and an acre and a half of land.

In 1954, the coach house and stable were converted into the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and Mass was celebrated on Christmas Eve, appropriately, in the "stable".

The area was declared a parish in 1955 and Fr John Kelly was appointed Parish Priest. The first parish Mass was celebrated in January of that year. The parish boundaries included parts of surrounding parishes. Fr Kelly took up residence in the house, on which there was a great deal of work to be done. Following a parish meeting, the necessary repairs were done by voluntary labour and functions were organised to raise money to pay for these works.

The members of the parish were mainly young married couples with small children and they were keen on providing a school. At this time a bank loan was impossible, so a co-op was started which immediately raised £7,000. As this was insufficient to build the three roomed school, the men of the parish decided they could do all the work required, apart from the brickwork.

This work commenced on Easter Saturday in 1956 and continued every Saturday and holidays until the beginning of the school year in 1957. The Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart opened the school on this day. In 1956, the land where the tennis courts now stand was purchased. As the nuns had to travel from a convent in Balwyn each day, a convent was considered to be a necessity. When the house at 301 Elgar Road became available it was purchased and Fr Kelly moved in. This is the block on which the existing church now stands. The two-storey house became the convent in 1959.

The work of the parish men continued. The school grounds were concreted. The tennis court pavilion was erected and the tennis courts and basketball court were laid by contract. Work continued with improvements and additions to the convent and the school.

By 1961, it was obvious that the numbers in the parish had increased and the converted stable was now inadequate. A new church was needed. While this was being discussed, the property next door to the presbytery in Elgar Road, on the corner of Erasmus Street, became available and so it was purchased and converted into the new presbytery. The old presbytery was then demolished, and land was purchased from the Board of Works. The new church was planned on this land and part of the basketball court. A new court was marked out and constructed on the school grounds.

The work of constructing the new church was commenced early in 1963. A great

part of the interior fittings of the church, and the paving around the outside, was again done by people of the parish. The church was completed and opened by His Grace, Archbishop Simmonds on 20 March, 1964.

The church has served the parish for 50 years. To accommodate the changing needs of the community, refurbishments to the front, back and grounds of the church have taken place, under the guidance of Fr John Dowling. These extensions were blessed by Archbishop Denis Hart on 2 August 2014. The nave of the church had some refurbishment some years ago, when the altar rails were removed and the altar moved forward.

Parish Name & Patron Saint

The feast day of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour is celebrated on 27 June.

The traditional icon, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, believed to have been painted in the thirteenth century, represents Mary the Mother of God comforting the Child Jesus while the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, hovering in the upper corners, hold the instruments of the Passion. St Michael (in the left corner) holds the spear, the wine-soaked sponge, and the crown of thorns. St Gabriel (in the right corner) holds the cross and the nails. The intent of the artist was to portray the Child Jesus contemplating the vision of his future Passion.

Despite a foreboding vision of suffering, the icon also conveys the triumph of Christ over sin and death, symbolised by the golden background as a sign of the glory of the resurrection. The royal crowns on the heads of Jesus and Mary also symbolise their triumph as the King of Kings with his Queen Mother.

The icon was brought to Rome toward the end of the fifteenth century by a pious merchant, who whilst dying there, ordered by his will that the picture should be exposed in a church for public veneration. Crowds flocked to the church, and for nearly 300 years, many graces were obtained through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

In 1812, the church was destroyed and the picture disappeared. It was over forty years before it was rediscovered. In 1865, Pope Pius IX, who had prayed before the picture as a child, ordered that Our Lady of Perpetual Succour should again be publicly venerated. He later fixed the feast day on the Second Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist.

Today, the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour hangs above the main altar in the Church of St. Alphonsus Liguori in Rome, Italy.

Parish School

Our Lady's Primary School was established in 1957 when parents and parish combined skills to construct the original building. The school continues to operate as an integral part of the Surrey Hills Wattle Park Parish. The community spirit remains strong as does commitment to care, achievement and excellence - traditions maintained for forty years at Our Lady's.

Our Lady's is a small, friendly school with co-ed classes from Prep to Year 6. The school values the development of self-confidence, independent thinking, and care and sensitivity to others. The [school's website](#) provides further information about this welcoming community.

Priests at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour

1955 -	Fr John Kelly
	Fr Thomas Mulligan
	Fr Ronald Merrick
	Fr Peter Priestley
2005 - 2010	Dr Anthony Hicks
2011-2017	Fr John Dowling
2017-2020	Fr Mark Reynolds
2020 - continuing	Fr Brendan Reed