On May 28, 1892, a handful of Catholics presented Bishop Richard Scannell the deed and clear title to the original St. Charles Borromeo Church in North Bend, NE. This building had formerly housed the Congregational Church of North Bend.

Father Charles Mugan of Schuyler was asked by the Bishop to look over the situation in North Bend. He found a bad roof, no pews and a building in need of repair. He had the roof fixed, and ordered a confessional and temporary altar.

Father J.W. Jungels of Schuyler succeeded father Mugan and gave glowing reports to the bishop as to the growth and thriving spirit of his little mission.

Father Jeremiah McCarthy in Schuyler followed and he tried mightily to persuade Bishop Scannell to do something for the people of North Bend. The Bishop attached St. Charles to Fremont for a few months but Fremont was so busy with the growth of their parish plus their mission in Elkorn to provide much help.

Reverend Thomas Moriarty was the first priest to live in North Bend. In 1903 He had been assigned to St. Mary’s in ridgely but the Bishop told him his stay in Ridgeley would be short – he was sure that North Bend needed him more. In two years, Father Moriarty built a parsonage and moved in. From that day on, Catholics enjoyed regular Sunday masses.

Father Moriarty worked tirelessly on renovating the church and equipping it appropriately. He then turned his energy to the landscaping on the church and parsonage grounds turning the area into a small park. It was the pride of both Catholics and non-Catholics. He worked hard on his Sunday sermons which were considered “spell binding” and worked diligently bringing along the Catholic education of the children in the parish.

On May 4, 1913, Hugh and Emily Allan sold Lots 5 and 6 in block 26, North Bend, to the Church of St. Charles Borromeo for $1600. On March 19, 1914 an agreement was signed between the church and J. H. Craddock to build a new church for $20,800.

The building will be of pressed brick, trimmed with stone, having two towers. The style of architecture will be Romanesque. First, it shall be a building worthy of Christian faith, and secondly, a building every inhabitant of North Bend can be proud of.

The main altar, Romanesque in style with onyx pillars, has been donated at a cost of $1500 by the Emanuel brothers in honor of their father, the late John Emanuel. Other gifts included are two side altars ranging from $300 to $500 each, an altar railing costing $500, fourteen stations of the cross valued at $1000, and a gold chalice costing $100.

The interior furnishings mentioned previously were contracted from Dubuque Altar Manufacturing Company in Dubuque Iowa. Also included are specifications for 36 pews, 15 feet each, made of white oak with carving on top and bottom of arms. The finish for the pews is to be real dark gold with high gloss. Materials, workmanship and finish guaranteed strictly first class in every respect.

The corner stone was laid July 14, 1915. The community was invited. Bishop of Lincoln, Henry Tihen attended. Contents of the hermetically sealed copper box included the latest copies of the North Bend Eagle, Fremont Tribune, Omaha World Herald, Catholic Weekly and True voice. Photographs and names of the pastor, the contractor, and architect, the ceremony’s invitation and some coins were enclosed also. The July14, 1915 issue of the True voice stated the women of the parish served two sumptuous meals – one at noon, the other at 6 0’clock of which 160 chickens were included.

Here are a few North Bend Eagle excerpts: March 23, 1916: the two large domes are covered with shining copper, all varnishing is completed, city water has been piped to the grounds. Large stained glass windows expected soon. November 25, 1915: Work begins on tower windows. Cement work in basement finished. Father Moriarty has placed the order for the art glass and storm windows. Mosaic floors are being laid, all lights are installed, the scaffolding is out.

December 15, 1915: Father Moriarty returned from Duluth Minnesota. In addition to approving the construction of altars while there, he bought sanctuary statues – The Blessed Virgin Mary, one of St. Joseph and a statue of the Sacred Heart. Also ten brass and onyx candlesticks for the high altar, and eight of the same for side altars, carpet for the sanctuary floor, grill work for the sanctuary windows, a credence table and two elaborate cruets, marble baptism font, small set of chimes, a bell, and bench and chairs for sanctuary use. A vestment case was purchased for the vestment room and cork carpet was purchased for center and side aisles in the church.

The dedication of the new church occurred on Tuesday, July 11, 1916. At the time of dedication, the church was considered one of the most beautiful in the state. A July 6 North Bend Eagle article states: the splendor of the exterior prepares the observer for the measure and grandeur within. The beautiful yet delicate coloring of the stained glass windows are beyond description. The pews are of oak and are sturdy and comfortable. The stations of the Cross which adorn the walls are of statuary and each station in an individual work of art. Father Moriaty was not to enjoy his masterpiece for long. Two years after completion, his health forced him to retire. As the first his masterpiece for long. Two years after completion, his health forced him to retire. As the first pastor of St. Charles Borromeo, he labored nobly and well. The church stands as his memorial, a mute, yet eloquent testimony to his zeal as a priest and the artistry of his soul.

Father Timothy O’Sullivan succeeded Father Moriarty. He was here during the final and trying months of the first world war. He knew his time in North Bend was short so did not attempt any building projects. Rather, he concentrated on the spiritual values of life and offered parishioners the rich consolations of their holy religion. Father William O’Sullivan succeeded Father timothy O’Sullivan. They were not related. Under his youthful guidance, the parish grew and prospered. Soon it became necessary to have a hall. The old church on the north end of the property was not being used as it was too small for entertainment. Father William O’Sullivan added on to it until it became 30 by 80 feet. He also raised it and put in a full basement. The parish hall was considered on of the beast equipped hall in the whole territory for many years. He then turned his attention to the parsonage. Because water in the spring caused much damage to so many houses each spring, Father O’Sullivan also had the parsonage raised and installed a floor drain. The street north of the property was paved and paid for. All of these accomplishments however, do not give the whole picture of this zealous priest. He was an ever anxious instructor of the parish children whom he loved. He left North Bend in 1925.

Father George Smiskol came to St. Charles from St. Cecilia’s Cathedral in Omaha. He found it hard to acclimate himself to the peaceful surroundings of a small community. So he used his nervous, teeming energy working along spiritual lines. He held many novenas, inviting in outside preachers. He brought in many new converts and brought back to the fold some who had strayed away. He was encouraged by Bishop Rummel in Omaha to engage an architect to draw up plans for a new school. Plans were drawn up for a one story Spanish architecture building. He set out to collect funds for it’s erection but around that time a crack appeared in the façade of the beautiful new church. The sandy soil transmitted vibrations from freight trains located only three blocks south. Father Smiskil tried valiantly to have the damage repaired with little success. Then the local bank closed, tying up parish funds. In 1933, a disheartened Father Smiskol petitioned Bishop Rummel to take him back to Omaha.

Father Walter Thies arrived in North Bend on November 18, 1933. His first task was to repair the church façade. The rose window was in danger of Alling out due to a rotting frame. A new steel frame was installed and anchored in the wall with five steel bars. Basement ventilators were installed to prevent more dry rot. Water was seeping into the basement. Willing volunteers hauled in over 50 loads of dirt where landscaped provided proper drainage. In 1934 floors were sanded and refinished. All windows were repotted, lead which holds art glass was tightened and frames were repainted. The entire exterior was recalked, and roof, gutters and downspouts were repaired. In 1936 oil burners were installed in all church buildings. The southeast quarter of the block was purchased. The parish now owned the entire block. In 1937, a new and modern kitchen was added to the parish hall. The old kitchen was not part of the dining hall which would seat 860. In 1939, the men of the parish worked tirelessly to improve church grounds. Moline elms were planted, flower beds started. As preparations for St. Charles golden jubilee started in 1941, it was decided to reroof and paint the parish hall, add tapestry brick to the parish rectory to match the church and insulate its top ceiling. The Golden Jubilee was celebrated on June 7, 1952. Father Thies passed away on June 18, 1948 in the parish house. He was 52. He is buried at Woodland Cemetery.

Father John Hilt arrived on July 16, 1948. During his tenure, membership grew from 100 to 250 families. The 2nd Vatican Council brought about spiritual renewal. A new altar was installed so the priest would face the congregation. The mass was now said in English instead of Latin. Lay lectors participated actively. Fatherhilt retired on May 17, 1968 after 49 years in our Lord’s service. He died on April 26, 1971 and is buried at Woodland Cemetery.

Father Stanislav Golik followed Father Hilt. Upon arrival in June of 1968 he started work on spiritual and material projects. The rectory was remodeled during the winter of 1968. The roof of the church was repaired, new copper gutters and downspouts installed, brick tuck-pointed, inside chapels remodeled, flower room added, and electrical work brought up to safety standards. The interior of the church was remodeled in 1969. The first Saturday night Mass (considered to fulfill the Sunday Mass obligation) was said on May 24 1970. In 1984 the church was air-conditioned and remodeled again – pews repaired and revarnished, statues repainted, carpeting installed in the sanctuary and church aisles, new linoleum under pews, church windows reinforced, and protective glass installed. The old parish hall was dismantled, property leveled and reseeded. To remedy what Father Golik saw as young people being deprived of adequate proper Catholic religious education, he reorganized catechism instruction. A new church Roger electric organ was purchased or $4,890. The choir loft was recarpeted, and new lights installed.

From the beginning of his arrival, Father Golik pursued and engaged the cooperation of leading parishioners in every facet of parish life. His parish council had a decisive voice in all parish undertakings. St. Charles was one of the first parishes in the Archdiocese of Omaha to have an active and effective parish council. One of their first projects was the building of a new parish center east of the church. The structure east of the church was completed in 1978. The large hall can seat 250 people. It has 12 classrooms, a large kitchen, a library and two storage rooms. Before the church was air conditioned, it was used for summer Masses. On August 15, 1982, Jim Minarick and Bob Moser held the paid off mortgage note of $260,000 as Father Golik lit it. Father retired in June of 1986.

Father Hugh Schwartz served our parish family from 1986 to 1992. In 1986 a new reconciliation room was constructed in back of church to give parishioners more privacy and the opportunity to have face to face receipt of the Sacrament of Penance.

The following priests continued to provide spiritual guidance for St. Charles.

Father Dan Galas 1992 to 2000

Father Tom Sellentin 2000 to 2002

Father Jerry Melchior 2002 to 2004

Father Paul Albenisius 2004 to 2006

In 2006 Father Don Cleary replaced Father Albenisius. In 2013, the parish council began exploring the possibility of building an addition to relocate a new enclosed electric lift to replace the exterior lift located at the south side door entrance. Mike Mestl of West Point was hired to work on the addition. An injury to the contractor and long periods of waiting for building materials caused many delays in competition. Father Cleary stayed with St. Charles until the summer of 2015.

Father Keith Rezac arrived in July, 2015. The new addition to the church, featuring three beautiful, restored stained glass windows form St. Patrick’s in Clyde was completed in 2016. The new lift addition was dedicated on October 9, 2016.

This year, 2017, marks 125 years of worship in the St. Charles Borromeo parish. It is not only a time to reflect and honor the foresight and sacrifice of our ancestors, but also time for all of us, the young and the old, to pledge continuing their spirit of maintaining and passing on our heritage of faith. Thank you.

We hope you can join us for rolls and coffee at the Parish Center.