

# THE GOOD NEWS

FROM ALUMS & FRIENDS & FAMILIES

Providing tuition assistance to students at Community of Saints Regional Catholic School

## Mark Your Calendars

APRIL 15

10 a.m. Mass & Brunch to Commemorate Church Fire

See page 3 for details

MAY 19

St. Matt's Class of '68 Reunion

See page 4 for details

MAY 20

Reunion Sunday at Community of Saints Chapel

See back page for details

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## Isaac's Wish — To Help Homeless COS 6th Grader Takes Action

*My name is Isaac. I want to help the homeless. Everyday on the way to school I see the homeless waiting in the cold....*

Last summer, Isaac Garcia's family moved from Inver Grove Heights to their new home near Mounds Park on St. Paul's East Side. They chose the neighborhood because it's close to the Indian Mounds and the site of a weekly water ceremony the family takes part in together with a group of Native American elders. But not long after the move, Isaac and his 13-year old brother, Jose, began to notice some of the people in the neighborhood.

"When we were in Inver Grove, we didn't see homeless people," explained Isaac's mother, Tara Perron. "Where we live now, there's a church on the corner. It's not a shelter, but they offer some services. Every day we'd see people walking there, children with backpacks and older people. You can tell who's homeless. The boys would talk about it at dinner, and as winter approached, they started asking, 'Where are they going to go? What will they do?'"

*...Why do I have a good family and a place to sleep with heat, while the poor people sleep on the floor with nothing but the clothes they have to keep them warm?*

As it got colder outside, Isaac thought more and more about the people he saw everyday. One day, as he was sitting in his room, feeling bored, he got an idea. He talked to his mom and she told him to write down his thoughts in a notebook. He did, and ended up with a paragraph that explained what he wanted to do and why. He titled it, *Isaac's Christmas Wish*.

*...I'm going to do my best to work at getting donations and make sure the poor people will at least have one night of warmth and some food this Christmas.*

— Continued on page 10



Msgr. Cecka at the graduation party for St. Matthew's Class of 1968. As alums plan 50-year reunion, they swap stories of school days. Story on pages 4-5.

**Dear Alums, Friends and Families of Community of Saints:**

April 15, 2018, marks the 50th anniversary of the "Great St. Matthew Fire." I was in my final year of seminary. I had a St. Matt's classmate, Bernie Blaeser. A few days after the fire Bernie and I went to see the site. People were standing in small groups near the corner of Hall and Robie, talking, wondering, grieving.

I got a first-hand report of the fire from "the horse's mouth." Msgr. James Cecka was pastor of St. Matthew and also professor of Church History at the St. Paul Seminary. He spent two or three class periods reliving the fire with us. He was truly a colorful gentleman and his descriptions, rapid fire, on the inhale and exhale were enjoyed by all.

Not only did the fire open a new chapter in the history of St. Matthew parish, 1968 was a transformative year in the life of our nation. Lyndon Johnson was denied a full second term, two Minnesotans — Hubert Humphrey and Gene McCarthy — competed for the presidential nomination.

In April the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. In early June, following the California primary, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Racial and anti-war demonstrations occurred throughout the country; and with them often rioting and destruction of person and property. Students took over universities. In the midst of this unrest, Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew won the November election on a law and order platform. Late in 1968 there was a moment of enthusiasm and delight as three American astronauts circled the moon on Christmas Eve and read from the Book of Genesis.

1968 was the year that severed the past from the future, and on the West Side, old St. Matthew's died and a new St. Matthew's was born.

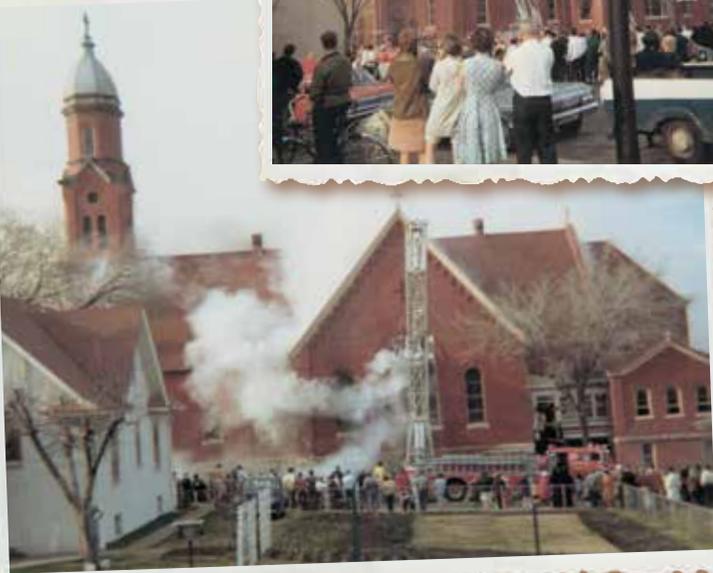
With gratitude,  
Father Stephen Adrian,  
Canonical Administrator of  
Community of Saints



St. Matthew's Church before the 1968 fire.



# Fire Remembrance...

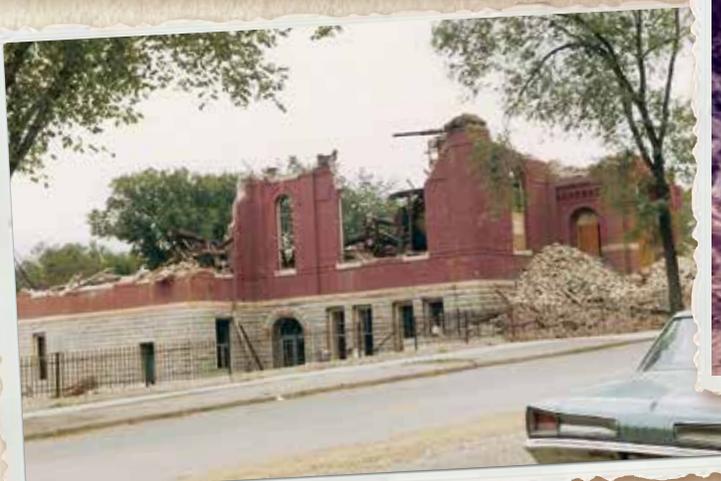


## 50 Years Later...We Remember

Join us to commemorate the fire that destroyed St. Matthew's church.

10 a.m. Mass on April 15, 2018, followed by brunch in St. Matthew's Social Hall. Fr. Steve Adrian, who celebrates his 76th birthday that day, will preside. RSVP to Linda Rivera at St. Matthew's Parish Center 651-224-9793 to ensure we have enough for everyone (free will offering.)

For more information you can visit St. Matthew's website [www.st-matts.org](http://www.st-matts.org). On the website you can also find a link to a special edition of *The Good News* published for the 40th anniversary of the fire. The issue features the stories of parishioners and photos of the church.



## ST. MATTHEW'S CLASS OF '68 50 YEAR REUNION Pray, Potluck and Party

On Saturday, May 19, from 5–10 p.m., all members of St. Matt's class of 1968 are invited to come and celebrate with classmates and friends. Following the 4:00 p.m. Mass at St. Matt's, the class will gather in the Social Hall and share a potluck supper (free will offering). Fr. Steve Adrian will offer prayer and reflection and there will be an opportunity to contribute to the tuition assistance fund for Community of Saints. Memorials to friends and family are gratefully accepted. For details, check out our Facebook page at Saint Matthew Class of 1968 or call Doug Lieser at 651-457-2510. Pray, eat, laugh and remember with classmates and friends.

Reunion committee members share a few memories (left to right) Gina Palumo Deveney, David McDonald, Susan Pavlak, Vicki Petschauer Baker, Monica Weigenant Bahls and Mike Vasterling.



### Changing Times

**Susan:** Back then, it seemed like everything changed all the time. We went from fasting to no fasting, from Latin to English, from Cecka to Whittier, from traditional to Vatican II. Our experience was reflective of the times, nothing stayed the same.

**Vicki:** Things really started changing in 1965 when we were in 6th grade. That was the year they turned the altar around to face the congregation.

**Monica:** But they didn't stop saying the Mass in Latin until 8th grade.

**Mike:** That's when I became an altar boy. I tried in 6th grade but I couldn't recite all the Latin.

**Gina:** Remember singing up in the church choir? We would sing for funeral Masses and weddings.

**Vicki:** They'd just pull us out of school to sing at funerals. Can you imagine going to a church and saying, could your elementary school children sing at our wedding?

**Susan:** It was presumed back then. There wasn't any wedding planning.

### FIRST GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

**Vicki:** In 1968 the girls finally got to play basketball. Up until then it was just the boys. We played three other schools, St. Mike's, St. Joe's and Holy Trinity from South St. Paul.

**Monica:** We played Iowa Rules, so each team played six girls, three on each half of the court. And you couldn't cross half court, you had to hand off the ball. Sr. Mary Conrad was our coach.

**Vicki:** Picture this, a nun in full habit, dribbling down the court.

**Monica:** She taught us how to play. She hitched up her habit with one hand, dribbled down to the basket, shot a layup, scored and said 'That's how you do it.'



**Sr. Mary Conrad** coached the first team.

### Lunch Monitor and the Firecracker

**Gina:** When we were in 8th grade, we were lunch monitors, so we'd watch the kids in the younger classrooms for 30 minutes while the nuns had lunch in the convent.

**Mike:** I got in so much trouble one time, I almost got kicked off the baseball team. I had the 5th graders. They were out of control every day. One day, on my way to school, I saw a firecracker. So I picked it up and put it in my pocket. When I was with the 5th graders at lunch, I lit it and gave it to one of the kids to throw out the window. Only, it didn't make it out the window. It hit the glass, fell and went off inside the room. I remember looking at the class saying, "Please don't tell on me." But I knew someone was going to tell.

Later that day, Sister takes me out in the hallway and said, "So Mike, tell me what happened." I told her, I was honest. Then I got home and my mom said, "You're in big trouble, Mike." And I said, "I'm sorry. It was stupid." But my mom stuck up for me since I'd told the truth. I didn't get kicked off the baseball team. For punishment, Sister made me read Animal Farm by George Orwell and then I had to give a report in front of the class. It was actually a pretty cool punishment.



**Michael Vasterling,**  
1968

## COLLECTING GREEN STAMPS FOR THE NUNS' FIRST CAR

**Vicki:** Do you remember bringing empty Hilex bottles to school for the nuns?

**Monica:** I think they cut out the plastic and used it in their headpiece.

**Susan:** We were always bringing in old stuff for the nuns to use. My mom would say, 'the nuns need it.' You didn't want to know what for.

**Gina:** I remember before the nuns could drive, we used to give them rides to the Mother House in Mankato.

**Mike:** When they got permission to drive, the parish bought them a car by collecting green stamps. I remember going to the Lois Leopard Show on Channel 9, and towards the end of the show, the gift house stamp girl came on. It was Nancy Nelson, and she'd draw a name out of a hat and whoever's name she called got to pick which section of the house they wanted. You got all the stamps in that section.

**Vicki:** We got them a white station wagon.

**Mike:** And later we built a garage.



David McDonald,  
1968

## Alum Adds A&F&F to Christmas List

Last Christmas, Dave McDonald ('68) told family members that instead of gifts, they should make a contribution to A&F&F's tuition assistance fund in his honor.

"Nobody knows what to get anybody for Christmas," Dave explained. "Somebody came up with the idea of donating to a charity so I said, that's what I prefer."

Dave thought A&F&F seemed like an obvious choice. "You know where the money's going," Dave said "With some other places, it's hard to be sure."



## The Church Fire

**Mike:** We were playing at a park on Cherokee and Ohio and my friend's mom yelled out the door, "St. Matthew's is on fire." I thought, "Oh good, the school is burning down. No more school." We ran down there and when I came around the corner and saw the church on fire — it was like someone punched me in the stomach. I saw the flames exploding out of those windows and thought, no way it's going to make it.

**Vicki:** We were there watching. My aunt was crying and praying.

**Susan:** The praying worked. No one got hurt.

**Gina:** We graduated just after that. Our ceremony was in the basement of the old church.

**Monica:** We were each only allowed to invite two people because the space was so small.

**Mike:** Our graduation was like nothing.

**Susan:** It was the beginning of a year of strife.

## Good Friends, Good School

**Monica:** I feel so blessed to have been able to go to a Catholic school and have the friends from there. That isn't something you find very often.

**Susan:** We got a rigorous education. They taught us critical thinking and gave us a real solid foundation.

**Gina:** We loved St. Matt's.

**Susan:** It's like a present wrapped in barbwire. It's worth opening but you're going to have some scars.



Left to right: Rick Fretschel,  
Arnold Meyer, Tim Quirk,  
Joe Dwuznik and Jim Schmidt



Left to right:  
Monica Weigenant  
and Patti Rasmussen

## St. Matthew's Class of 1968



Row 1 | Dottie Lancette, Rita Amon, Cindy Klein, Lori Krull, Barb Bitterman, Kathy Curran, Bonita Kelzer, Msgr. Cecka, Anna Marie Karas, Jolynn Blaeser, Barb St. Sauver, Judith Bengston, Barb Kolb, Kitty Kelly, Barb Schaefer

Row 2 | Gary Meyer, George Schadegg, Jim Leahy, Larry Dalzell, Diane Wallner, Ann Del Vecchio, Veronica Kachel, MaryKay Wallace, Arnie Meyer, Joe Nielsen, Greg Kaufhold, Cisco Ramirez

Row 3 | Marge Kuhns, Allison Boehmer, Mary Thompson, Kathy Schwartz, Patti Rasmussen, Jean Wanger, Cathy Diloia, Diane Marx, Di Duncanson, Mary Beth Hass, Linda Lingofelt, Gina Palumbo, Betty Maher, Diane Ketchmark, Margaret Bukowski



**Row 4** | Debbie Potzmann, Debbie Wazlawik, Jeannette Ringold, Jeannie Wenker, Monica Weigenant, Jean Behan, Maureen Clancy, Nancy Reeves, Michelle Gran, Vicki Petschauer, Joan Livingstone, Maggie Perron, Jonette Wazlawik, Victoria Buchite, Heather Britton, Patti Achman

**Row 5** | Donny Walker, Steve Landsberger, Jeff Bade, Michael Schletty, Rick Hill, Mike Cassidy, Mark Wilmes, James Klein, Randall Jenniges, Keith Reiland, Daniel Burns, Mike Vasterling, Joe Dwuznik, Jeff Alfveby, Montell Pierce, Rick Fretschel, Joe Beissel

**Row 6** | John Nafus, Steve Ernst, Joe Behan, Mike Kaess, David McDonald, Gary Santori, Jim Redding, Robert Patton, Mike Maloney, Peter Exley, Tom Schwab, Kevin Horst, Eugene Tonda, Jim Schmidt, Gary Danmeier, Rog Aguirre, Dennis Thul

## St. Michael Class of 1968



**Row 1** | Debra Dinger, Diane Weldon, Mary Jo Marthaler, Mary Gramling, Linda Lesch, Kathi Zaspel, Bonnie Thomas, Vernon Scott, Mike Kelly, Jeff Johnson, Jeff Adams, Scott Ditters, Wayne Pietruszewski

**Row 2** | Gayle Seidl, Kathy McCarthy, Cindy Gauthier, Jack Kunik, Mike Wolters, Steve Demulling, Mike Verstrate, Jerry Helget, John Anderson, Ed Plant, Michael Smith, Tom Gornick

**Row 3** | Pat Dierberger, Sheryl Weegmann, Joan Beaubien, Sue Lemenager, Lora DeTomaso, Jodi Husnik, Margaret Bach, Mary Lou Chapple, Judy Hughes, Sandy Heath, Gloria Diehl

**Row 4** | Becky Schultz, Mary Jo Nordstrom, Robyn Cunningham, Tom Hueth, Dave Olson, Mike Morgenstern, Rick Perkovich, Pete Dunn, Rick Deneen, Robert Cardwell, Jim Daugherty

## St. John Vianney Class of 1968



**Row 1** | Harry White, Don Cheney, Michael Loomis, John Patterson, David Mohrbacher, Ed DuBois, Brian Hall, John Kustritz

**Row 2** | Sue Raby, Mary Wacker, Leanne Henry, Diane Peterson, Carolyn Arnold, Suzanne Warzecha, Denise Badalich, Kathy Motzko, Claudia Marschinke, Eileen Kalal, Marijo Murr, Reyne Branchaud

**Row 3** | Stephen Kedrowski, Bill Sexton, Peter McLean, Susan Just, Collette Gill, Therese Gruber, Ellen Fahey, Donna Palkowitsch, Debbie Orchard, David Gould, Larry Wilebski, Tom Patterson



# Students Thank Supporters in Prayer and in Person

Every morning when COS students pray together, they include the names of contributors to A&F&F. It's an expression of gratitude, and by the end of the school year students will have prayed for everyone who has helped support their education.

Students got to say thanks in person last December when alums, friends and families celebrated Mass together. Afterwards, 8th grade students joined our generous supporters at a reception to express their appreciation and tell them about the school.



Photos: Peg Lindlof



Isaac with homeroom teacher, John Capistrant.

Isaac met with staff at the church near his home to find out what kinds of things would be most helpful for the homeless people who came there. Then he began asking for donations of money and supplies so he could assemble Blessing Bags. Each bag contained a collection of items such as hand warmers, bottled water, fruit snacks and granola bars, small but useful things. He wrote down the name of everyone who gave him money, sent them a thank you card, and kept the receipts for every item he purchased.

Isaac turned to his school community for help. He approached his homeroom teacher, John Capistrant, who also advises the student leadership team. "Isaac came after school one day and told me what he wanted to do. I was amazed at his whole plan," John said. The two agreed that Isaac would make a pitch to the entire student leadership team and ask them to make his project the school's Advent service project. "He presented his idea and the leadership team got on board."

The students put out donation boxes in front of the school office and spread the word to families. They collected boxfuls of socks, hats, mittens, jackets and boots, as well as personal care items like soap and toothbrushes.

"When one voice speaks up and goes into action, others will follow," observed John Capistrant. "To see that happening here at school, there's no way to make a teacher more proud."



COS 8th grade student, Jose Garcia helped his brother every step of the way.

*...I will not stop until I know that I have succeeded. All you have to do is donate... one hat could help save someone's life. My goal date is a week before Christmas...*

Isaac also turned to Native Elders and friends for support. "We pray out loud when we bless the waters, and Isaac read his letter in front of the elders," his mom said. "He told them anything you can give will help."

The week before Christmas, entire rooms in Isaac's house were full of the things he had collected. Under his direction, the family helped sort all of the items and prepare them for delivery.

On Christmas Day, the car was packed with all the donations. The trunk was full and even with the back seats folded down to make more room, Isaac had to hold a box on his lap. When he arrived at the church, the staff was surprised to see how much Isaac had collected. They laid it out on a table and people were invited to take what they needed.

Isaac was surprised at how full the shelter was on Christmas. He guessed there were around one hundred people there for dinner. He saw families with children, including babies. That made him sad and reminded him why he started the project in the first place.

But it was Christmas. There was music playing and everyone seemed happy. After the pastor led the group in prayer, Isaac took the stage to play his drums and sing in Ojibwe, something he does every week during the water ceremony with the Native Elders. One man in a wheelchair came up to Isaac to shake his hand and say thanks. Isaac was touched.

"These people mean a lot to him," Isaac's mom said. "And seeing how his work made a difference was the best part."

Isaac agrees, which is why he says it's the start of a new tradition. Next year at Advent, he plans to do it again.

*...I know I am UNSTOPPABLE. This is my Christmas wish this year.  
— Love Isaac*

## 85% of COS Students Registered for 2018-19 School Awarded Grant for Successful Drive

The challenge came from the Healy Foundation. Get 85% of students registered for the next school year and earn a portion of a \$5,000 grant. Usually COS might have 5% of students registered in January and reach 85% in August. But with money on the line, the school administration accepted the challenge.

"We just let our families know that we had an opportunity to win this grant and they were happy to help," reported Principal Bridget Kramer. "I didn't think we could get that many families but they totally came through for us."

The successful registration drive reflects the schools continued success in enrollment, which has continued to climb during the school year. Enrollment is now almost 20% higher than 2016-17. Kindergarten enrollment is also strong and the preschool is near capacity for 2018-19.



## Catholic Schools Week Celebrates Friendship, Learning and Service



On Dress-Your-Best Day, students get extra time for Buddy Reading.



Winners of the school Geography Bee show off their certificates.



COS Students make Valentine cards for residents of Cerenity Nursing Home.

## Once-A-Month Donor

**Linda Sellars** has contributed to A&F&F's tuition assistance fund for many years, but now that she's retired, she's decided to become a sustaining donor. "Rather than give a big amount, once a year, I give monthly," Linda said. "It's easier to budget for."

Linda first moved to the West Side in 1977 after graduating from The College of St. Catherine. She chose the neighborhood because it was an easy commute to her job with Lockheed Martin in Eagan.

Having grown up attending Catholic school in Wisconsin, Linda is a strong advocate for faith-based education. "I have always tried to support the school," Linda said, reflecting on her 40 years as a member at St. Matthew's, including a stint on the School Advisory Board. "Thinking back, it's really important for kids to have that kind of grounding in morals and ethics."

**COMMUNITY OF SAINTS  
REGIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

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The wedding of Patty O'Day and Richard Clemen, held on February 24, 1968, was the last wedding celebrated at St. Matthews's before the fire.

## Please join us

APRIL  
15

**Remember St. Matthew's  
old church and the fire that  
destroyed it.**

10 a.m. Mass followed by brunch in the  
Social Hall (free will offering).

**RSVP** to Linda Rivera at the  
Parish Center — **651-224-9793**.

See page 3 for details.

MAY  
20

**REUNION SUNDAY**

11 a.m. Mass at Community of Saints,  
335 Hurley St. East

Following Mass there will be light breakfast,  
refreshments and tours of the school.

All alums are welcome with special  
recognition to all classes that graduated  
in a year ending in a '3' and '8'.

Special invitation to the 50th classes – 1968;  
60th classes – 1958; 75th classes – 1943

**RSVP** to **dlieser@communityofsaints.org**  
or call the school — **651-457-2510**.