

SPECIAL DATES FOR OUR PARISH COMMUNITY

September 20—the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the “new” church. The 1886 church burned down on Easter Monday, 1968. The parish community was pledged to rebuild. This was in the shadow of Vatican II.

The leaders of the parish were aware of the challenge to provide a space for worship along with a space that could be used for community [West Side] events. One of the decisions [somewhat controversial] was to use chairs which would allow for changing the space for different events and for different liturgies. The chairs that were purchased in 1969 and 1970 are still in the space. [Those leaders purchased good quality furniture.]

The worship space was designed following Vatican II, especially the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [one of the official documents of the Ecumenical Council]. The space itself, though very nice, always feels incomplete with worshippers. The architecture helps us to realize that “we are the Church”. [Those spaces have been called “churches” because it is the place where the Church [we] gathers.]

In 1959, The Church of Saint Michael had moved from its West Side campus to a new campus in West St. Paul. The church was not occupied for a number of years; it became the temporary home for the worship and Masses of Saint Matthew. Many people have recounted that they were married at the “old St. Mike’s.”

Also, the parish decided to put in a commercial-grade kitchen. This provided a space to prepare, serve, and eat school lunches. For many years the lunches were prepared “from scratch” by a talented group of cooks and servers.

The social hall provided a wonderful space for parish gatherings and allowed the parish to realize some income through rentals. That continues to this day, though it has shrunk due to COVID-19.

The leaders of the rebuilding decided to build on top of the previously separate boiler room. [Remember the large smoke stack in the playground area?] The boilers were not damaged in the fire so they were able to continue to provide heat for the buildings on the campus.

September 21—the feast of Saint Matthew. This year we are celebrating that feast for 135th time as a parish. [Of note, there are almost 200 parishes in the archdiocese; ours is the only one named after the first Evangelist.]

The parish began as a locus for the German-speaking Catholics in Saint Paul. [The neighboring parish, Saint Michael’s, served the Irish-speaking.]

The parish produced a book for the 25th anniversary—only in German!! The 50th anniversary book was half in German and half in English. [The English was a translation of what was printed in German.]

We, the parish community of Saint Matthew, strive to continue to be the “Good Samaritan on the banks of the Mississippi.”