



# THE GOOD NEWS

FROM ST. MATTHEW

*The community of St. Matthew exists in the world as a visible expression of God's love*



## The First 125 Years...

...It Was Never Easy

**T**hese children, photographed around 1892, were among St. Matthew School's first students. Since the school hadn't been built yet — and wouldn't be for another 10 years — they were taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the basement of the newly built church (photo page. 3). Over 200 children attended classes daily in the church basement, which, at this time, also served as convent space for the Sisters.

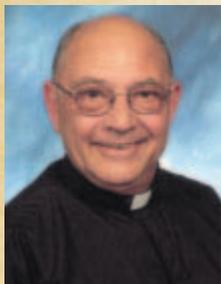
About a year after this photo was taken, The Panic of 1893 triggered one of the biggest recessions in the country's history, resulting in bank closures, lost savings and thousands of lost jobs. Instead of turning to parishioners for support, our fledgling parish had to stretch its resources to provide aid to

those who were out of work and in need. It was an anxious time; a large debt hung over the parish but the people of the parish were in no position to help pay it.

As we all know, the Parish overcame these early challenges, built a school, enlarged its church, and established a strong community.

This newsletter shares some highlights from St. Matthew's 125-year history. As you view these pages, we ask you to reflect on your own experiences and memories of St. Matthew's. To find out about sharing your stories, turn to page 12.

— Maggie Lee, Editor



Fr. Steve's homilies are available on-line at [www.st-matts.org](http://www.st-matts.org)

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**Dear Saint Matthew Alums and Friends:**

In 1979/1980, as part of a parish renewal effort that involved visiting most of the parish households by a trained visitor, the parish embraced a simple mission statement: **St. Matthew's exists in the world as a visible expression of God's love.**

The parish leadership sought to find hands on opportunities for parish members to engage people in our community in a visible and tangible way of expressing the compassion and inclusive love of God. The mission statement said clearly that our witness to the love of God had to be "visible."

In 1980, St. Matthew's was invited to form a serving team to prepare and provide a warm meal once a month as part of the fledgling Loaves & Fishes effort to feed the hungry. Dorothy Robinette and Agnes Mooney coordinated two teams of two dozen volunteers each to prepare and serve the meals. St. Matthew's was one of the first serving teams to sign up. Meals were served in the basement of Assumption Church. Since that beginning in 1980, St. Matthew's has provided one or two serving teams monthly to participate in Loaves & Fishes. Members of the parish, especially members of the Rosary Society, began knitting mittens, caps and scarves for the guests at Loaves & Fishes. More than 600 sets of mittens/caps/ scarves were produced and distributed at Christmas time.

At that same time, the St. Matthew Parish Pastoral Council proposed that our parish welcome any grieving family and provide opportunity for a funeral whether the deceased is Catholic or not; whether the deceased is a parish member or not. The concern was that opportunity be provided for a quality Catholic funeral service for those families who are turned down at other churches for whatever reason.

These two efforts began a growing sense that the parish will seek to identify itself and live out its mission as a Roman Catholic Eucharistic community by its corporate practice of the corporal works of mercy:

1. Feed the hungry
2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Clothe the naked
4. Shelter the homeless
5. Visit the sick
6. Visit those in prison
7. Bury the dead

Thus over the past thirty years the parish has undertaken:

- to be a daily site for Loaves & Fishes
- to make the parish house available on a long term lease to Casa Guadalupe (a Catholic Worker house)
- to provide space and support for St. Mary's Health Clinic (a free health clinic under the direction of the St. Joseph Sisters)
- to be a site for the Hispanic Outreach of Catholic Charities, welcoming the stranger and immigrant into our community
- to provide Catholic education to families in the community at a tuition that is affordable to them
- to initiate the neighborhood development effort (NeDA) which seeks to renew and strengthen the housing stock and commercial property of the community
- to establish a child care center to provide quality, safe, affordable child care for the community
- to encourage the use of our parish facilities by community groups — religious and secular — as a way of being a good and hospitable neighbor

There are so many other ways, large and small, in which those corporal works of mercy are made visible in the lives of parish members — adults and children — as well as parish groups and organizations.

Since 1978, it has been my privilege to serve this community as member and pastor. The Community of St. Matthew has been an occasion of grace for me.

I am excited to be part of the effort to chart a course for the future of this compassionate and merciful community.

Yours truly,  
*Stephen Adrian*  
Pastor

**1886**

St. Matthew's Church is founded.  
Fr. Alois Plut is named the first pastor.  
Church construction begins.



**1887**

Original church is complete. Children begin attending classes in the church basement.



## 1880s-1910s

**1897**

Father Peter Jung is named pastor and serves for 31 years, until 1928. He is St. Matthew's first American-born pastor.



**1902**

A separate school is built. After 15 years of teaching classes in the dark and crowded church basement, the students move into their new building complete with 10 classrooms and an all-purpose auditorium on the third floor.

The same year, the Pastor's residence, which was located on George St. near Stryker, is picked up and moved to its present location at Hall & Robie. It is a big project but the \$1,000 cost is seen as cheaper than building a new home.



**1888**

The Rosary Society is established. It is the oldest, continuously operating group at the parish.



**1906**

The convent is enlarged to accommodate the growing number of nuns needed to teach in the school. That same year, a new pipe organ is installed in the church.

**1908**

Major renovation begins on the church to enhance and enlarge it. Once complete, there's seating for 875, almost doubling the number of people it will accommodate.



**1917**

After the U.S. enters World War I, there is a surge of patriotism accompanied by strong anti-German sentiments. Many German-Americans are suspected of being spies, even those who are second and third generation Americans. Even the food people eat becomes suspect, leading to sauerkraut being renamed "Liberty Cabbage." To ease suspicions, church Trustees and Pastor Jung decide to discontinue the use of German language in the school and church.

**1912**

In the original school building, forty students in a classroom is common and considered acceptable. It is not until the end of the decade when an increase in immigrants to St. Paul leads to overcrowded classrooms and plans to expand the school.



# 1920s-1940s

## 1928

Fr. Jung dies and is replaced as pastor by Fr. Francis Schaefer. Due to poor health, Fr. Schaefer only serves for 4 years.

## 1929

A new addition is added to the school. It includes: 12 new classrooms, a gymnasium, library, kitchen and 4-lane bowling alley. With the additional space, the school now offers kindergarten and two years of high school.



St. Matthew's offers two years of high school from 1929-1957. Classes focus on providing specific job skills and the majority of students who attend are young women.



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## Drama Club

Included in the 1929 school addition is a gymnasium with a large stage. This becomes home for St. Matthew's Drama Club which puts on many elaborate productions during the 1930s. Complex sets, intricate costumes and live musicians are the standard as seen in this production of the operetta "Hulda of Holland."



**1932**

After Fr. Schaefer resigns, Fr. Alois Ziskovsky is appointed pastor. He serves until 1961.

**1944**

School students sell enough war bond stamps to purchase a Jeep and a PT Training Plane for the army.

**1945**

Ten men from the parish die during World War II: Joseph M. Sperl, Raymond Schaus, Philip Cowley, Buford Blanchette, Ray Haas, Richard Herzog, Richard Langesang, Thomas Palon, Joseph George Marthaler, and Joseph Lothenbach.

**MEMORIES FROM THE 1930s-40s**

## School Tuition 50 Cents Per Month But Only if You Had a Pew

School tuition in the 1930s at St Matthew's was 50 cents per month for families who "rented" a pew. Those with no pew paid double at \$1.00 per month. And like today, Pastor Alois Ziskovsky probably made exceptions for families who could not afford the 50 cents or \$1.00 tuition fee. Parishioners were also warned that it was a serious sin not to send their children to the parish school.

Tuition and pew rent were among the memories shared by members of the Class of 1944 at their bi-monthly breakfast on the first Wednesday in February. About 20 years ago, Don Mallinger organized the breakfast gatherings. There are still ten regulars who attend including: Phil Just, Lucille Lewis Gouette, Rich Littfin, Leo Showalter, Carol Suppon Schubring, Lois Ferber Hanson, Jerry Sexton and Mallinger. Rita Wolf Adams and Maydene Kubes are California "snow birds" who show up when the weather gets warm. Others, like Fr. Paul (Art) Casper from Franklin, Wisconsin drop in on occasion.

Littfin and Just started out in kindergarten in September, 1934, but admitted to being "held back" to repeat third grade. They claim that this was quite common for boys, especially if they started kindergarten early.

Other memories included walking with your class from the school to church to attend 8:00 a.m. daily Mass. Phil Just admitted that he was habitually late and entered by the side door. First Fridays included your own breakfast with 5 cent hot cocoa brought to the classrooms. The boys always tried to avoid Assistant Father Berg for confession. Other memories include: Fourth grade teacher, Sister Fabilia who was quite attractive; being punched by Sister Marcella (and hitting her back); "Fencing" with the metal School Police "Stop" signs; buying soup and/or sandwiches at lunchtime in the bar across the street from the gym.

Jerry Sexton remembers being excused from attending class in May, 1943, and May, 1944, to work on the family farm. It was a common practice in those early years of the school to release farm kids both in the Spring and early Fall.

## 1950s-1960s

**1951**

Two men from the parish die during the Korean War: Robert Loney, John Slipka.

**1952**

For the first time, school enrollment exceeds 1,000.

**1954**

Monsignor Ziskovsky announces that due to the growth of the school, it is not possible to find enough Sisters to do all the work. He asks for help to subsidize the training of young women willing to teach. It is the beginning of the era of lay teachers in Catholic schools.

**1957**

After being condemned as a fire hazard (parts of the building dated back to 1886) the old convent is torn down and replaced with a "state of the art" convent, complete with chapel, offices, recreation and music room. It can accommodate 32 nuns as residents.

**1958**

Due to overcrowding, St. Matthew's closes its kindergarten. The high school had been closed the previous year, but even with these extra rooms available, the school is still overcrowded with almost 1200 students.

**1956**

St. Matthew's Men's Club is established.



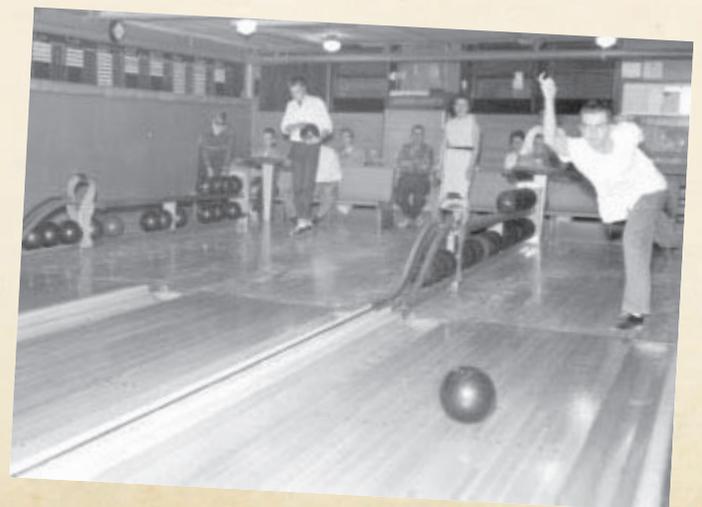
The young person's choir is one of many choirs in the parish at this time. The singers rehearse in the choir loft, accompanied by the old pipe organ — the console is on right and the pipes on the left.

## Memories from a Pinsetter

Dick Littfin ('44) remembers the four-lane bowling alley from the '30s & '40s. While he was in grade school, he worked there as a pinsetter. He recalls that each player paid him 10 cents for setting up their pins. It was a busy place.

"You had different leagues that participated down there," Dick says. "Bowling was quite popular. It drew a lot of people. You almost had to wear ear plugs."

As a pinsetter, Dick sat on a ledge above and behind the pins and lifted his legs out of the way when he heard the ball come rumbling down. After the ball had come through, Dick would hop down, place the fallen pins into a mechanical device used to place the pins, then resume his place on the ledge. After each bowler's turn, he'd throw a switch which allowed the mechanical device to reset the pins. "I remember if you had a poor player who didn't knock down many pins, it made your work a lot easier."



**1961**

After Monsignor Ziskovsky retires at the age of 86, Monsignor Cecka is named pastor.

**1966**

Thomas William Haney is killed in the Vietnam War.

**1968**

St. Matthew's original church, first built in 1887 then enlarged in 1908, is destroyed by fire on April 15, 1968. The elaborately carved wooden altars and statues, the beautiful, stained glass windows and the 650-piece pipe organ, are all lost. Some items are preserved, including the church bell.



The Rosary Society celebrates its 75 year anniversary in 1963. A pillar of the community during all those years, some members are shown here making donuts for sale at a festival.

**Changing Habits**

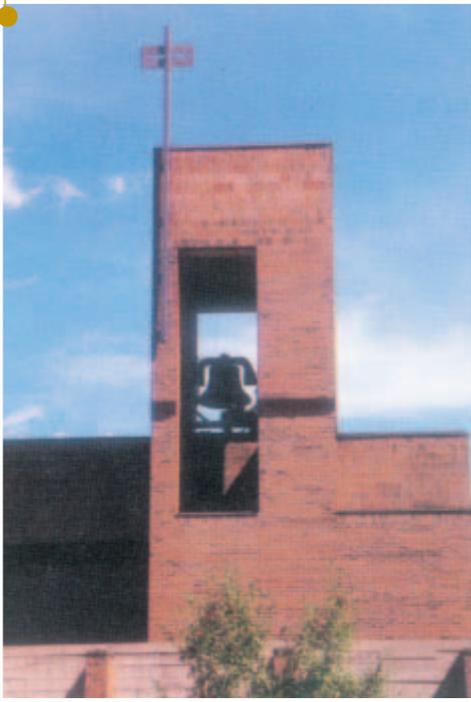
Beginning in the 1960s, the habit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame underwent major changes. In 1963, the habit they'd worn for decades was simplified, eliminating the wimple and dramatically reducing the size of the veil. Now any Sister could drive while wearing her habit. Over the next decade, the habit continues to undergo changes so that by 1970, Sisters are wearing very simple veils and contemporary style dresses. Within a few years after that, wearing the habit becomes optional.



## 1970s-1980s

**1970**

The new church is dedicated. While the design of the church reflects a contemporary style, the bell installed in the tower dates back to the first years of the parish. Salvaged from the old church, it is the original bell purchased by the parish in 1890.



**1971**

Fr. Eugene Pacholl replaces Monsignor Cecka as pastor. One year later, Monsignor Cecka dies and is buried from St. Matthew's.

**1973**

Kindergarten classes are reinstated at the school.

**1976**

As part of the United State's Bicentennial Celebration, St. Matthew's is selected to be one of 25 showcase schools around the country. Each room is set up as a one-room schoolhouse, reflecting a different period in history. Students and teachers dress in the costume of that time. In some rooms, no electricity or running water is used; students drink from pails of water with dippers and cups. Teachers are paid with a small gunny sack of grain.



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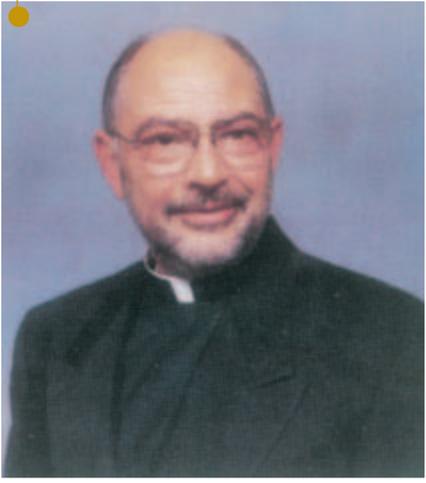


## Vatican II Brings Change

During the 1960s and 70s, St. Matthew's, along with Catholic Churches around the world, institute the changes brought about by Vatican II. During worship, Latin is discontinued and Masses are conducted in English. Priests celebrate Mass by facing the people. Lay people begin to participate in the service and are allowed to serve as lectors, read prayers of the faithful and present the gifts of bread and wine at offertory. At this time, Saturday Masses begin to be allowed on a limited basis. Some people celebrate these changes while others are uneasy about them.

**1978**

Fr. Steve Adrian is named pastor of St. Matthew's. Final Liturgical changes take place: Catholics are allowed to take Communion in their hands and Communal Penance services are allowed.



**1982**

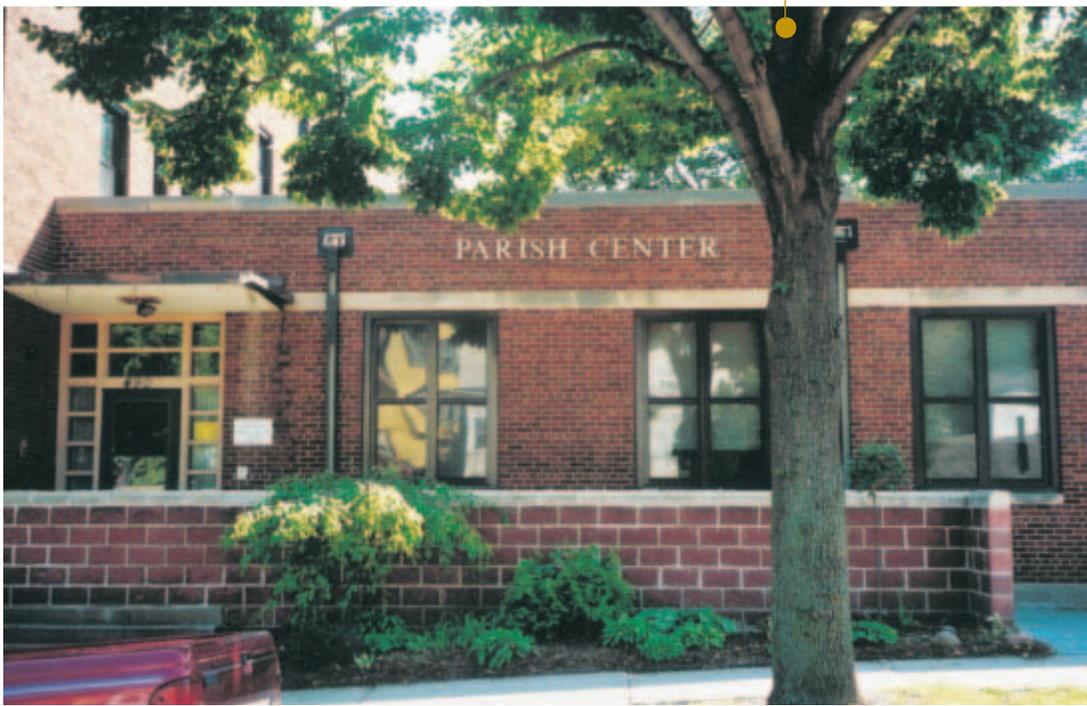
Parishioners begin serving a monthly meal at the Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul.

**1985**

The convent is renovated into the current Parish Center, housing parish offices, a child care facility and four apartments. St. Matthew's opens the Child Care Center once renovations are complete.

**1988-89**

Grades 7 and 8 at St. Matthew's School are moved to Brady High School.



**1991**

The Child Care Center moves to current location on Winifred.



**1992**

St. Mary's Clinic opens at St. Matthew's, providing free health care to people weekly.



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## Recalling All Favorite Memories!

What are your memories from St. Matthew's? We'd like you to share them. There are a couple of ways to do it.

- 1. Send us your Top Five Memories from St. Matt's.** Maybe your list includes the pipe organ from the old church, cinnamon rolls before school, the bowling alley, the kindergarten house, a special teacher or pastor, or maybe it's something completely different. Send us your Top Five list along with a short paragraph explaining why. The 125th Committee will use Top Five submissions to assemble a Top 125 List.
- 2. Write down your favorite memory and send it in** — include a photo if you have one. We'd like to hear about the people, places or experiences that made St. Matt's special for you.

All submissions may be emailed to [alumninews@st-matts.org](mailto:alumninews@st-matts.org) or mailed in using the newsletter envelope.

We plan to include your memories in a 125th commemorative publication. So send in your stories and stay tuned!

**VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE**

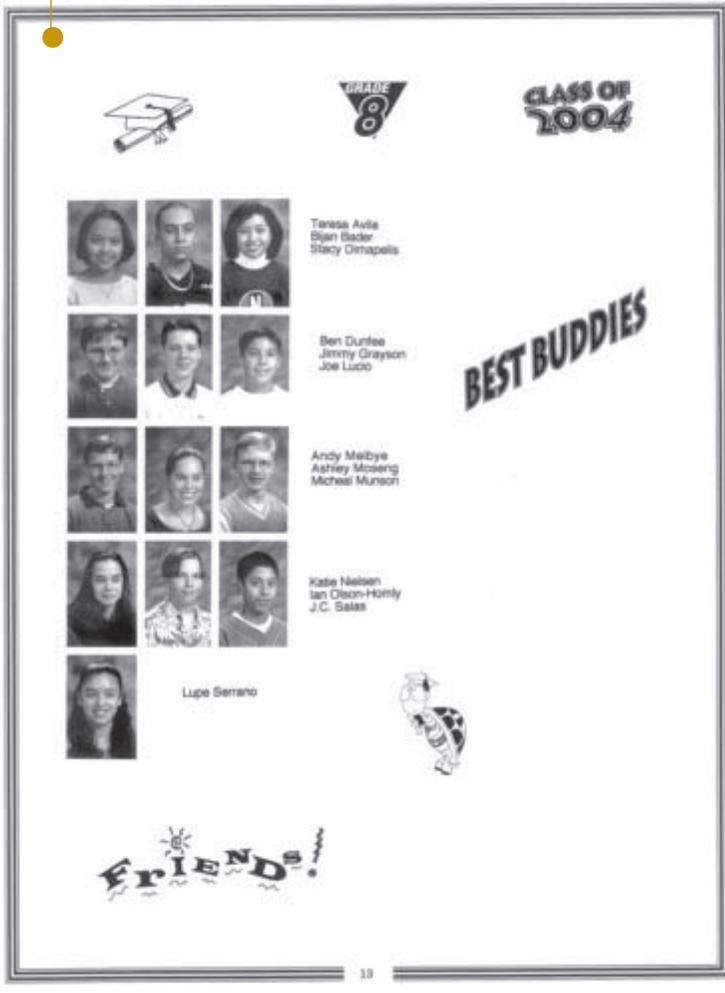
[www.st-matts.org](http://www.st-matts.org)

Find out the latest on the 125th Anniversary Celebration and other Parish news. We welcome your comments!



**1993**

After Brady High School closes, St. Matthew's reinstates 7th & 8th grade classes. Below is the 8th grade class of 2000, scheduled to graduate from high school in 2004.



**Join Us for Reunion Sunday  
May 1, 2011**

You can take part in St. Matt's 125th Anniversary by coming to Reunion Sunday! All alums are invited with special recognition to those who graduated in a year ending in "6" or "1."

Alums are encouraged to join us for 10:30 a.m. Mass followed by a simple brunch in the social hall and a tour of the school. It's a way for the whole parish to celebrate our school history, the success of our graduates and our West Side community — so please come and bring a classmate!

For more information or to RSVP, contact 651-224-6912 or email AlumniNews@st-matts.org. See you there!



One of the last weddings performed at St. Matthew's before the fire in 1968.

**Roots, Community and Faith**

By Jerry Sexton ('44)

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Rediscovering St. Matthew's Parish and School in the fall of 2006 was a renewal and appreciation for these three essential elements of life — where did I come from, who do I associate with and what do I believe?

My grandfather, John Wolters, and my wife, Marilyn's grandmother, Barbara Minea Zschocke, were both founding members of St. Matthews in 1886. My mother and her four brothers and Marilyn's mother and her four siblings all attended St. Matthew's School.

Both Marilyn and I were baptized at St. Matthews. I attended St. Matthew's School graduating in 1944 while Marilyn's family had moved to Nativity Parish in St. Paul. We were married in 1950 and for the first three years lived in St. Matthew's Parish. Our first two of eight children were baptized here before we moved into our new home in South St. Paul.

It's great to be back to our roots where we have also found community. Hopefully when I die (not real soon) I can be buried from this faith community.

# 2000s-PRESENT

**2000**

Kindergarten offers all day classes.



**2005**

KLT — St. Matthew's begins its own program providing before and after school care. The program, available to St. Matt's students as well as school children in the community, had been offered on the campus years before by the local YMCA.



**2007**

Alums and Friends committee forms to raise scholarship money for students at the school.

**2001**

St. Matthew's becomes a host site for Loaves & Fishes, serving dinners in the Social Hall free of charge, every week, Monday thru Thursday.



**2008**

After years of declining, school enrollment rises by almost 40%. That same year, Fr. Steve celebrates his 40th anniversary as a Priest.



**2009**

The Parish Rectory is leased to Casa Guadalupe who convert it into a Catholic Worker House, providing transitional housing to immigrants in our community.



**2011**

St. Matthew's Celebrates its first 125 years!





**PARISH COMMUNITY OF  
SAINT MATTHEW**  
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St. Paul, MN 55107

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[www.st-matts.org](http://www.st-matts.org)

**The Community of St. Matthew**

Hall Ave. and Robie St.  
St. Paul, MN 55107

Pastor: Fr. Steve Adrian

Parish Office: 651-224-9793

Weekend Liturgies:

Saturday - 5 p.m.

Sunday - 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

[www.st-matts.org](http://www.st-matts.org)

## EVENTS calendar

### ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES — March 9

Masses with ash distribution at 6:45 a.m. and 5 p.m. Prayer services with ashes at 9 a.m. (with the school), 12 p.m. & 7 p.m. (with Religious Education students.)

### MEN'S CLUB MEETING & IRISH SWEEPSTAKES CONTEST — March 9 at 8:00 p.m.

The meeting and contest will take place in the Social Hall.

### LENTEN FISH FRY — Every Friday from March 11-April 15

Regular serving time is from 5:00-7:30 p.m. The Fish Fries are co-sponsored by the Men's Club, the Rosary Society, Scouts, Home & School and Casa Guadalupana. We also dedicate a portion of our profits to the Street Children of Bucharest. Cost is \$9.75 per adult, \$5.50 for kids 5-13, free for kids under 5 yrs. Senior Citizen Special from 4:00-5:00 p.m. is \$8.00.

### MEN'S CLUB HAM BINGO — Saturday, April 9 from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Join us in the Social Hall where the Men's Club hosts a night of Ham Bingo. Win a ham or a cash prize. Bring the kids for pizza and fun – must be 18 to play.

### CELEBRATION OF FORGIVENESS — April 17 at 2:00 p.m. *\*non sacramental*

### GOOD FRIDAY FISH & CHIPS DINNER — April 22 from 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

**New this year** — the Men's Club will be offering a Good Friday fish basket dinner for \$7. All profits from the dinner will go towards reducing the parish debt to the Archdiocese. Future debt reduction dinners are in the works.

### HOLY WEEK SERVICES — April 21-24

**Holy Thursday**, April 21, 5:00 p.m. Mass

**Good Friday**, April 22, 12:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross, 5:00 p.m. Solemn Liturgy

**Holy Saturday**, April 23, 8:00 p.m. Easter Vigil (word, light, water, table).

**Easter Sunday Celebration**, April 24, 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Mass

### REUNION SUNDAY — May 1

All St. Matthew's Alums are invited to join us for 10:30 a.m. Mass followed by a complimentary brunch in the social hall and tours of the school.

*See page 13 for details.*