

# THE GOOD NEWS

September/October 2007  
Issue 2

FROM ST. MATTHEW

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



## Remembering the Day the Church Burned Down

**A**pril 15, 1968 was an infamous day in the history of St. Matthew's Parish. The 82-year old church, first built in 1886 and enlarged in 1908, was gutted by fire. The fire started in the south wing and spread quickly into the choir loft and bell tower. The bell itself was one of a handful of items that survived the blaze in tact. Firefighters and neighbors alike suspected arson, but it was never confirmed and the cause of the fire has remained a mystery.

This April will mark the 40th anniversary of that event. We want to recognize the occasion by sharing your memories surrounding it.

Do you remember that day? Were you there? Do you have a special story to tell? What did the loss of the church mean for you and your family?

Send us your stories and we will share as many as we can in the March/April newsletter. E-mail: [AlumniNews@St-Matts.org](mailto:AlumniNews@St-Matts.org) or use the envelope in the newsletter to mail it in. Deadline for submissions is January 15th.

**(TOP) Firefighters work to control blaze.**

**(ABOVE) Church as it looked before fire.**

### HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

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

September 21st is the Feast of Saint Matthew. For the past 30 years we have celebrated this feast on the third Sunday of September in conjunction with our annual parish festival. So, this year the parish celebrates the feast on September 15th and 16th.

In 1886 Bishop John Ireland established our parish and named it after the evangelist, Saint Matthew. Matthew, whose name in Hebrew means "Gift of God," is one of the four Gospel writers, two of whom were also Apostles — Saints John and Matthew.

### The Historical Matthew

We find the bits and pieces of the story of Matthew in Chapter 9 of the Gospel and we find him listed as "Matthew, the tax collector" in Chapter 10.

The city of Capernaum, Matthew's place of work, was built on the side of the Lake of Galilee and had about 1,500 residents. Capernaum enjoyed a privileged economic position, its resources being fishing, agriculture, industry and trade. Capernaum was commercially linked in a prominent way with the northern regions, i.e. upper Galilee, Golan, Syria, Phoenicia, Asia Minor and Cyprus. The presence of a detachment of Roman soldiers at Capernaum (Luke 7: 1-10; Matthew 8: 5-13) stresses the importance of the city as a crossroad for many travelers leaving and entering the region.

This cosmopolitan community attracted many visitors and business people. It was a center of not only commerce, but also education and the arts. People from other areas needed to change their currency into local currency to do business — this was one of the functions of the "money changer" and "tax collector". Capernaum was a border town provided with customs agents (Mark 2:13-15) along the main imperial highway leading to Damascus.

These customs agents also served as tax collectors and money changers and were considered non-observant Jews because they made their living dealing in and touching foreign money, and thus rendered themselves "impure".

Matthew did this work and had a tax booth on this major road on the outskirts of the city. It was at this spot that Jesus saw Matthew and said to him, "Follow me". Matthew immediately left his customs station and followed Jesus.

### Matthew Models Inclusive Love of God

The ministry of Jesus announces the inclusive love of God. As a way of dramatizing this He is often in the presence of "tax collectors and sinners." Jesus dines at the table of Matthew and among his invited friends — tax collectors — to the chagrin of the Pharisees.

It is ironic that this outcast and "impure" Jew should be named "gift of God". This name is but another way to teach that the inclusive love of God touches all — even those we might regard as disposable or unimportant.

For 121 years the Church of Saint Matthew has tried to demonstrate the inclusive love of God. Today we seek to embrace our neighbors and to bring our resources to the community. Saint Matthew is a great model of God's inclusive love. Saint Matthew shatters the assumption that only "insiders" can be called by Jesus to follow Him. Saint Matthew encourages us to meditate on the Word and to put the Word of God into practice.

Come; celebrate St. Matthew at our parish feast on the weekend of September 15th and 16th. Mass on that weekend is Saturday, 5 pm and Sunday, 8 and 10:30 am. Stay and enjoy the parish festival.

Yours truly,

*Stephen Adrian, Pastor*

## Fall Festival September 15-16th

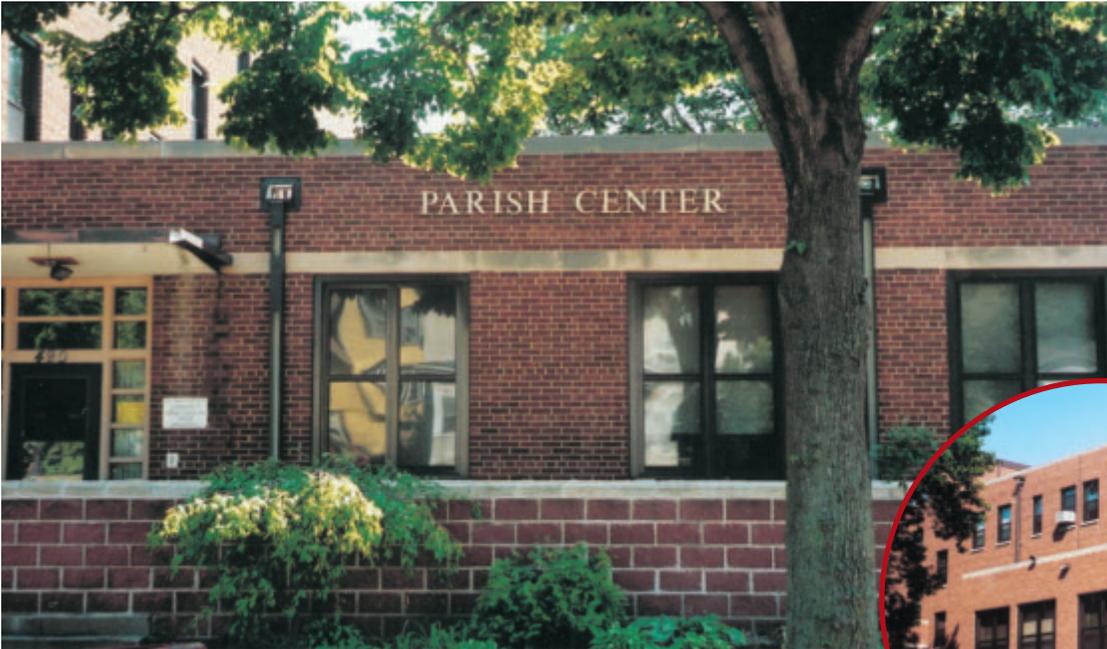
Join us this year for our annual Fall Festival. There'll be activities both Saturday & Sunday.

Don't miss Saturday's Polka Mass at 5:00 p.m. Afterwards, the Men's Club will be serving up burgers, brats, hot dogs and cold drinks in the parking lot. After a bite to eat, play bingo, cribbage or Texas Hold'Em in the Social Hall. Outside, live music performed by Rocka-Rolla will perform hits from the Fifties & Sixties as well as some Polka favorites. Band members include parishioners Richard Schletty, Jack Heitzinger, Chris Stevens and Mark Evans (for more on music [www.schletty.com/rocka-rola.html](http://www.schletty.com/rocka-rola.html))

On Sunday from 11:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., we'll be serving up a Diner-style Chicken Dinner complete with roast chicken, mashed potatoes & gravy, coleslaw, corn o'brien, dinner roll and chocolate fudge cake. The cost is \$8 for adults. Kids 12 and under have a Kids Meal option for \$4. In the gym there'll be games for kids, a cake walk, concessions, and Bottle Lotto. On both days, there'll be a bake sale and silent auction.

For more information, call the parish center at 651-224-9793.

**We'll see you there!**



Parish Center on Hall Avenue after new window installation.



## New Windows in the Parish Center

BY MARIAN WOLTERS, CLASS OF 1951

The occupants of Saint Matthew's Parish Center have a whole new outlook. They now see the world through energy efficient, double-hung windows. They can easily catch the breeze through new screens. And in winter coziness is guaranteed. The new windows were all made to order and installed in sections over the last five months. They replaced over 140 wooden, single-pane, crank out windows that were fifty years old.

The Century Club, Rosary Society, the Morning Mass Crowd, and individuals came together to fund the window project. Their generosity exceeded the cost of the windows so new air conditioners were added to the endeavor. Donors are memorialized and honored in a Donors Book, which is kept in the Chapel.

The Parish Center was built in 1957 as a "state of the art" convent. A chapel, offices, recreation room, and music room were on the first floor. The basement housed the kitchen, laundry, and trunk room. There were 32 bedrooms and centralized bath facilities on the second and third floors. Over twenty School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) happily moved in to this generous space.

A walk through the first floor of the Parish Center is a good way to learn about the many ministries at St. Matthew's. In addition to parish offices, there's an office for Saint Matthew Loaves and Fishes, Saint Mary's Clinic, Catholic Charities Hispanic Outreach/St. Paul, as well as a small Adoration Chapel, which is open during office hours.

On the lower level KLT, Kids Learning Together, a before and after school program for grade school age children uses the majority of space. In the past five years the Parish Center roof has been replaced, the elevator refurbished, and some rooms have received fresh paint, and new carpeting.

Sisters of Notre Dame still live on the premises. Space on the third floor has been renovated into a formation facility where women can live with the sisters as they discern their future and the possibility of joining the SSND order.

The new windows can be symbolic of a future for our parish which can be clear and bright. Let's hope light comes in to give all of us new energy.

1944

LEO FRANCIS SHOWALTER, JR.

## Leo's First Day of School

Leo Sr., my father, was born in Iowa in 1897 and married Lena Garmen. Their first child was a girl and they named her Merle. The second child was also a girl and was named Elois (Bunny.) The next child was a boy they called Bud. The fourth child was also a boy named John (Spike) and the last child was a girl they named Joan (Joannie.)

Now here is the problem. Bud!!! He was born in St. Paul in 1929. At five years of age the family moved to 118 W. George Street. Bud remembers the day of the big move.

The new house on George looked so big, varnished wood floors, linoleum covered kitchen floor, the dining room heater grate next to the buffet, and also the large attic. What a playroom!

The Big Problem — kindergarten school — Bud had heard about school but did not know what it was. The Big Day had arrived. Bud was ready. Ready for what he had no idea, but it must be something big because everyone else was sure excited.

Mother and Bud started for school, his hands were sweating. Mother was talking about what was going to happen. Bud was short and Mother was tall. He could not hear all of what she was saying, but he thought she said, your name is not Bud. What, not Bud?

Bud was my name all of my life, five years, they always called me Bud, or maybe Buddy. Now I can't answer to Bud, what's this all about? No name child said nothing. What could he say he had no name!! Mother then said your name is "Leo," just like your father's. What? Dad was Dad! He also had his name changed to Leo, but now I was to be called Leo? What is going on?

Now I was nervous. School was BIG — a lot of kids — all kinds of rooms — bells ringing — ladies dressed in black and white robes with chains hanging from their belts with a cross attached. Everyone called them "Sister." They were not my sister. Why should I call them Sister? No way.

My mother left. All alone, what a mess. Small chairs, a small playhouse (don't go into it,) lots of windows, small cubby holes — all alike, one was mine. Which one? They all look alike.

Now the black and white dressed Sister came over and asked me what my name was? Well I knew it was not

Bud but I could not remember what Mother told me. It was not Dad, his name also changed. What to do? I looked at my new Sister and said nothing. She asked me again, no use, I did not know my name. I started to cry. She sat me down and pasted a sign on my chest. What it said I did not know. I could not read.

Soon all the kids had signs pasted on their chests. Someone called out Leo!! Hey, I knew who that was. It's me! That was my first day.

1972

THOMAS SMITH

*Excerpt of letter to Fr. Steve Adrian*

...I have over the years traveled to many places both here and abroad. I have seen the terrible things we as humans sometimes do to each other and have watched friends lose their lives to senseless violence. In 1996 I studied at a specialized school for both foreign and American military and law enforcement executives and have trained to combat terrorism. In 2001, I was at the Pentagon just a few days after 9/11 and also noticed that Washington, D.C. looked like a picture out of the Left Behind series. And with Hurricane Katrina, well words cannot even describe the sites.

What does all of this mean? Simply put that my faith has become the pillar for always trying to find something positive when terrible things happen. God allows for all of us to make choices in our lives and mine is committed to making our city and country a safer place to live. Your work as the pastor of St. Matthew's church also plays a pivotal role in making our neighborhood a safer place....

As far as an alumni memory, well, you already know that a Sister of Notre Dame beat me in an arm wrestling match while I was in 8th grade, so I am going to leave that one alone.

1954

PATRICIA PALON ROLEWICZ

My favorite teachers were Sister Maria, who taught 5th grade, and Sister Romana (Delores Hodap,) 8th grade. They were young, "with it," and tremendous fun to be around, as well as being fine and stimulating teachers. I credit them with instilling my life-long love of learning and study.

1944

JERRY SEXTON

## Rediscovering “The New” St. Matthew’s

Marilyn and I were truly excited this past year when we rediscovered all the “good news” taking place at St. Matthew. I say rediscover because I am an alumnus of St. Matthew’s School and Marilyn and I were parishioners for the first three years of marriage (1950-1953) before moving to South St. Paul. We officially became parishioners again last October.

St. Matthew’s parish is not the same place we left in 1953. The old church is gone. There is only one priest, not three. Half of the 800 envelope holders live within the old parish boundaries with the others coming primarily from the suburbs to the south. This same transformation has occurred in many older urban neighborhoods all across the United States.

### The Good News from St. Matthew

Today at St. Matthew’s the “people are the Church” as proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council. You can feel a real spirit of joy that comfortably blends with the sacredness of worship. People do not attend because of obligation but because they are called by God at the heart level.

Fr. Steve Adrian has been at St. Matthew’s for 29 years. He is the best liturgist and Gospel homilist I have ever heard. He doesn’t read the Gospel but gives it from memory. It is like hearing an eye witness report about the life of Jesus. Fr. Steve is a humble person who is quick to praise the parishioners for their generosity in giving of their time, talent and financial resources to the various parish ministries.

St. Matthew’s has an unbelievable number of ministries that not only serve the West Side neighborhood but also reach out to places like New Orleans, Romania and Catholic Palestine. Fr. Steve likes to refer to St. Matthew’s as the “Good Samaritan on the West Side of the Mississippi.” If you are a parishioner you already know about these ministries with over 40 featured in booths and displays at a recent Parish Ministry Fair. If you are an alumnus (or alumna) you can read about the various ministries in these issues of *The Good News*.

### St. Matthew School — a Survivor

There are now only ten Catholic Schools (including St. Matthew’s) that continue to operate in the older St. Paul-Minneapolis urban neighborhoods where once there were 30. These surviving schools also have relatively small student enrollments compared to the past. They are now schools of racial diversity with the majority of students coming from low income families. There is also an increasing number of non-Catholic kids. The same is true in most urban areas in the country. Cardinal James A. Hickey of Washington DC, recently deceased, was quoted as saying that “We stay in the city to educate not because they are Catholic but because we are Catholic.”

This is a new and very successful ministry. These Catholic schools provide a safe learning environment in older, poor city neighborhoods. It is an excellent educational opportunity for a new generation of future urban leaders where they also learn moral and spiritual values along with experiencing the love of God.

### Alumni & Friends of St. Matthew

Alumni & Friends is being organized to help expand volunteer and financial support for St. Matthew’s School. Through *The Good News* newsletter and other publicity we also hope to attract additional support for the Parish and its many ministries.

As we age we become more appreciative of the generations who have gone before and the sacrifices they made that benefit our lives. It is now our turn to prepare for and help those who follow us. I, for one, want it to be a better world for my having been here.

*Jerry Sexton is one of the founding organizers of Alumni & Friends of St. Matthew. He and his wife, Marilyn, have eight children, 17 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.*

### TO THE EDITOR:

I was dismayed to see in the (July) newsletter that Bernie Mike’s (’76) name was not included in the Alumni committee piece. Bernie was instrumental in helping to form this committee with me. Please make some mention of him in your next newsletter.

– Michele Ross Edwards, ’64

FROM THE PRINCIPAL | **Doug Lieser**

As I approach the start of my 9th year at St. Matthew's and my 3rd year as the Director of Education, I am



**Doug Lieser**

pleased that the same values that attracted me to St. Matthew's are still with us today. We continue to live our education mission: *to be a visible expression of God's love, make a difference in lives, and provide a foundation of academic excellence.*

I always enjoy the time I can spend with alumni when they return to visit the school. For the more recent graduates, it is an opportunity to connect with students I taught and learn about the new and exciting events in their lives. For older alumni, it is an opportunity to learn what a great impact our school has had on their lives and to hear the wonderful stories that make St. Matthew's what it is today.

Today we continue a commitment to excellence that means constant growth and improvement. This year, curriculum updating has brought in new art and physical education equipment. We will also continue the technology upgrades that began last year with a new mobile Mac Book lab. We currently have five staff members working on Master's degrees through the University of St. Thomas and the Murray Institute. Our professional development efforts for the year will focus on meeting the diverse learning needs of our students.

We are excited to be adding new programs. 4th-8th grade students will be able to receive band instruction. We are also bringing chess back this year as an after school program. And we're adding a federal and state funded breakfast program that will allow all of our students to receive a nutritious meal upon arriving at school. Studies have shown that breakfast programs improve academic achievement and reduce truancy.

We are excited about the year ahead of us, and we will continue to keep you informed on school events and activities as the year progresses. If you have questions about any of our programs, please feel free to give me a call. I would also encourage you to check out our website at [www.st-matts.org](http://www.st-matts.org) And of course — I'd love to have you stop by and visit the school!



**Mrs. Volkenant reads the Harry Potter series to her 5th grade students.**

## The Magic of Reading Harry Potter

BY LYNN VOLKENANT

For seven years I have read out-loud to the fifth graders each day. Every year we have read books I-IV of the Harry Potter series.

I read aloud every day, no matter which grade I am in (yes, even in middle school) because my 3rd grade teacher made a lifelong impression on me. When we returned from lunch, she read aloud for 30 minutes. She read *Charlotte's Web* and all the Little House books. No one moved, or made a sound. Before then, my father read aloud to me from the time I was born and reading has always been my passion. I went so many places in my imagination.

And guess what? I grew up, became a teacher and found that all these years later, kids still love being read to, no matter what their age.

The 5th graders, Father Steve, and I have gone to all the movies that were made of Harry Potter. Last year I took the entire 5th –8th grade students to movie 4. We thought since the most recent movie came out in the summer, it would be fun to invite all my present and former students to meet at the theatre on July 13, and see the new one together.

There were about 60 students and their families who joined Miss Kryjeski (middle school teacher,) Mr. Lieser and me for the big event. There were students from all seven 5th grade classes I have read to. It was so exciting for me to see the students, their families and to share the "magic." *Lynn Volkenant taught 5th grade for seven years and now is the Assistant Principal and Middle School Religion Teacher.*

**From the Editor**

# Why We Chose St. Matthew's School

**F**or those who don't know me, I want to come clean. I'm not a St. Matt's graduate or a West Sider. I'm a St. Paul native who, until we moved here six years ago, visited the West Side a handful of times to eat dinner at Boca Chica.

We got here by chance. After living out of state for 12 years, we were expecting our 2nd child and decided to move back to Minnesota. A whirlwind weekend of house shopping in Fall 2000 landed us in West St. Paul, a block away from Cherokee Park.

My husband, Rich Dunn and I now have three children: a son in the 4th grade, a daughter in 1st grade and a two year-old who is a future member of the class of 2019.

We joined St. Matthew's Parish and decided to send our children to school here not because of tradition or history or habit. It's not even the closest Catholic school to our home.

We picked St. Matthew's for its diversity. We believe having friends and classmates from a variety of ethnic

backgrounds and income levels is the best preparation for whatever paths our children follow as adults.

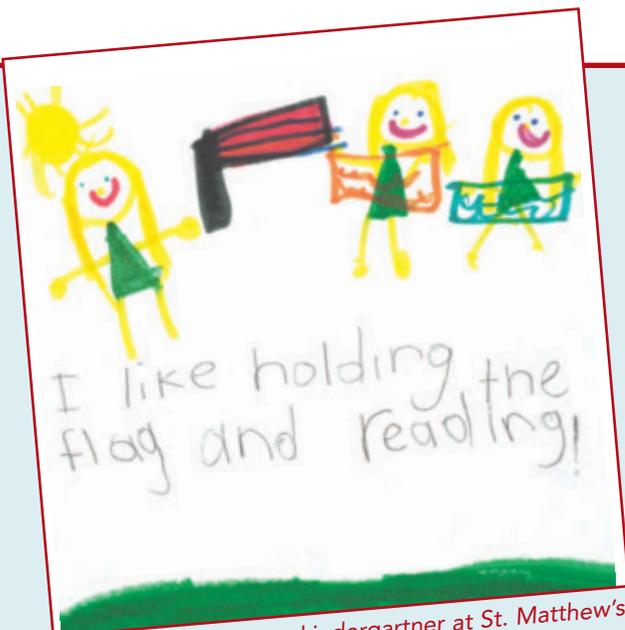
We like that students not only learn Catholic values, they live them through hands-on Student Service Projects, something you'll be hearing more about in future newsletters.

We value the small size of the school and the opportunities it provides for each student to develop their unique talents in a supportive environment.

We assumed our children would get a good education at St. Matthew's...it is a Catholic school...but we've been impressed at how our small school, with limited resources is continually on the cutting edge of education. Something you might not expect from a school with a "new addition" built over 70 years ago.

St. Matthew's alumni have a right to be proud of their school. Not only for how it was but for how it is today

*Maggie Lee*



Drawing by Allison, a kindergartner at St. Matthew's

**"Every Tuesday we go to meet the Elders at Wilder. It is very fun. We do flowers, paper birds, and we play bingo with them." Sam G, 3rd grade**

**"St. Matthew's is my community family. I never feel out of place. I feel like everyone cares about me." Nathan, 5th grade**

**"I like to play sports and they have really good sports teams and coaches. Even though we only won two basketball games in regular season it was fun to be able to play." Elina, Middle School**

**"People try to teach you self-control and social skills in everyday situations so you know what to do if something ever goes wrong in or out of school." Ben, 5th grade**



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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

### FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL – September 4th

### FALL FESTIVAL – September 15-16

On Saturday, come to the Polka Mass at 5:00 p.m., grab a burger or brat, play bingo, cribbage or Texas Hold 'Em and enjoy live music provided by Rocka-Rolla. On Sunday, join us for a Diner-Style Chicken Dinner with all the fixin's, games for kids, a cake walk and Bottle Lotto. There will be a silent auction and bake sale held on both days. (See pg. 2 for more details.)

### MARATHON FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL – October 5th

This is the main student fundraiser for the year. For the month preceding Marathon Day, students collect pledges to raise money for school. It's a fun activity with friendly competition among individuals and grades and prizes awarded for those who raise the most. For information on how to sponsor a student call the school office at 651-224-6912.

### BLESSING THE ANIMALS – October 6th

In recognition of the feast of Saint Francis, the saint who loved animals, at 6:15 p.m. animal lovers are invited to bring their pets to this outdoor service conducted by the Hall Avenue entrance. Fr. Steve Adrian will bless each animal in this ceremony that honors our beloved friends.

### OLD COUNTRY BUFFET FUNDRAISER – October 9th

Don't cook tonight! Join us for dinner at the Old Country Buffet on Robert Street from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. Tell them you're with St. Matthew's and a portion of your dinner proceeds will be donated to the school.

### ALL SAINTS DAY MASSES – November 1st

At 9:00 a.m., everyone is invited to worship with the students as they celebrate the Feast of All Saints. Other Masses for the Holyday are at 6:45 a.m. and 5:15 p.m.