

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

Obligation to Attend Sunday Mass & Holy Days Reinstated July 1, 2021!

This will mark the end of dispensation in Minnesota. For more information and stipulations, visit christourlightmn.org.

SUMMER
2021

CHRIST OUR LIGHT CATHOLIC PARISH QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Be the Light



Trusting the Holy Spirit to Lead Our Future

By Fr. Kevin Anderson, Pastor

We are in the process of selling our South Church. Therefore, we are one-step closer to building our new church! On Sunday, May 23, Bishop Don Kettler officially closed the South campus (formerly St. Pius X until the merger with St. Edward in 2010). This was a joy-filled celebration, yet sad in many aspects.

Bishop Kettler led participants through official decommissioning rituals with around 100 people attending. For as a building and its furnishings are blessed when it becomes a Church, it becomes "de-blessed" (or de-commissioned) when it is sold or no longer to be used as a worship space.

The South church (as well as the North Church) have been up for sale since June 2017. Recently the Land Selling Committee worked aggressively with our realtor team at *Edina Realty* and Bishop Kettler to find a marketable price. As we announced on Pentecost Weekend, the South campus is to become a senior liv-

ing residence with an estimated 44 apartments for seniors to dwell, build community and have their basic needs met. The plan also includes a space for a chapel, so that religious services (including Catholic Masses) can be celebrated. We expect to close on the property in mid-July and renovations will begin immediately. The buyers seek to establish a beautiful living space that honors the legacy of the South building while focusing on the well-being and comfort of its residents.

The decommissioning liturgy was the concluding ceremony to an inspiring week of activities called "Igniting Faith Week." It started with the parish's 11th anniversary recognition at the weekend Masses of May 15/16. This led into two evenings of parish renewal, led by John Poitevent of *Parish Catalyst*, which is part of *Renew International* based in New Jersey.

John led parishioners through thoughtful material and hope-filled challenges

focused on how the Holy Spirit is guiding us locally and globally. John's presence is part of an 18-month relationship that Christ Our Light was invited to participate in, along with four other parishes from around the country.

Other events of Igniting Faith Week included a memory wall of photos of the South building; a nine-day Novena; an online recording of South/St. Pius X parishioners reminiscing (see below) an evening of *Remembering South through Stories* with goodies and storytelling; and a 24-hour Adoration.

The sale of South is a significant opportunity for our parish to honor who we have been (as two merged congregations), to celebrate the vibrancy of who we have become, and to anticipate the growth and vitality of who we are meant to be. In all aspects, our slogan has been to "trust the Holy Spirit" leading us into our future. This entire newsletter is dedicated to that trusting process.



THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES...

Fr. Kevin Anderson and Molly Weyrens, Pastoral Associate, interviewed some of our more seasoned members for a time of sharing some great stories and fond memories of St. Pius X. Reminisce with Marilyn Herman, Margaret Haugland, Barb Frantesl, Ron Mathison, and Eileen Bialka with the recording, "Remembering St. Pius X," available to view through our parish *YouTube* channel: christourlightmn.org.

Steve & Chris Koehler: Wherever We Go, God Will Be

By Jenifer Rindels,
Ministry Coordinator



St. Pius X (South) has long been a fixture in the Chris and Steve Koehler family; a pillar in their faith journey. Memories made in this church have marked many seasons in their lives. St. Pius X has been a place where they have sought refuge from the pain of losing loved ones, as well as from the worries that life can sometimes bring. It has been the place that they have found hope and happiness in their commitment to one another through marriage and the baptisms and faith journeys of their children.

Chris' parents, Art and Vonnie Valerius, joined the St. Pius X faith family in 1959, shortly after its opening. They raised their children in this church and laid to rest two young sons after their deaths only a few short years apart. With steadfast commitment to their faith, they remained active in various committees within the church until they passed. Art and Vonnie instilled this commitment to church and faith in Chris and her siblings, as had Steve's own parents. As adults, Chris and Steve recognized that missing Sunday Mass left an emptiness which had a noticeable negative affect on their week. Attending Mass on Sunday was routine, and even after their marriage, a stop at Chris' parents' home after Mass became a part of the tradition. Chris and Steve shared this commitment with their own children who sang for Masses and were altar servers and ushers.

While the physical structure of the church will be missed, Chris is glad that the beautiful Stations of the Cross will be relocated on the land where our new church will be built. She will miss the stained-glass window depicting Jesus with his arms outstretched as it brought her comfort on many occasions as she lit a votive candle. This warm, welcoming faith community and environment that even out-of-town family members often commented on will continue at the new church. Chris put into words what so many of us are feeling. "It will be like a chapter closing when they close the (church) door. But it isn't about the church; it's about God. I definitely have a connection to this church but, wherever I go, God will be."



Parishioners gathered to vision and discuss the future we want for our Catholic faith and our faith community with guidance from our speaker, John Poitevent, from *Parish Catalyst*. Thank you to all who participated in our Igniting Faith Renewal Nights, in person or online.

Fostering Dynamic Disciples

by Molly Weyrens, Pastoral Associate



What a whirlwind of activity there has been around Christ Our Light! As Bishop Kettler shared at the Decommissioning Service, "Where there is change, there is life," and I couldn't agree more! I loved that our honoring and closing of the COL-South came during Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was very evident and I think assisted us all in more ways than we can even recognize. amidst the shared remembering, grief, excitement and care that was present.

As you may know, the parish is part of an 18-month program called *Parish Catalyst*. Five staff members and four parishioners meet online four times for a two-day meeting alongside four other parishes across the United States. Our gatherings are facilitated by John Poitevent, to help all of our parishes learn how we might grow Dynamic Disciples. According to *Parish Catalyst*, a Dynamic Disciple is "A follower of Jesus who is intentionally engaged in a process of change, activity, and spiritual progress."

During our parish's time with John here presenting for our Igniting Faith Renewal Nights (available to view through our *YouTube* Channel: christourlightmn), we shared in small groups several times about how we see this happening – or not happening at Christ Our Light. At the end of the second session, John asked us to reflect on what Christ Our Light might look like in five years. Here are some of the responses:

- "All will feel welcomed."
- "We will be intentional about our social time together through coffee chats, time around a bonfire or table to visit and learn about each other's lives."
- "The church will be full of young families, with strong family ministries to support parents with connection and learning."
- "We will meet people where they are at as opposed to sticking to a strict linear system of formation based on age and schedules."
- "We will be a parish that's known as a place where people can find the support they need - think offering meals and other outreach."

John said, "What would it mean for Christ our Light not to be the best parish IN the community, but the best parish FOR the community?" Lots to ponder.

We invite you to pray for this process and to reflect on what role you will play in becoming and encouraging dynamic discipleship. May we be open to all of the ways the Holy Spirit moves us!

As we move ahead with *Parish Catalyst*, we invite ALL of you to share your vision of what Christ Our Light looks like five years from now. As John challenged us, "You are creating the future of Christ Our Light." We need many voices to share in the vision.

Email your vision for the parish to Jenny Adams, Communications/Office Assistant, with the subject line, "FUTURE OF COL," to jennya@christourlightmn.org.



Glen & Karen Westman: The Blending of Lives and Stories

by Wendy Rappé, Director of Faith Formation

The blending of a family is like the blending of faith communities.

No one gives a better example of that than Karen and Glen Westman, long-time parishioners of Christ Our Light Parish, with deep roots in St. Pius X Church.

Glen's first wife, Laureen, who went by "Pete," passed away 24 years ago, and was buried from St. Pius X. She and Glen raised five children. If you know Glen, you know he is not a wallflower with nothing to say. Quick of wit, and also quick to lend a hand at St. Pius X, Glen has memories of singing in the choir, ushering, cleaning and surely more, but he's humble. He remembers the old choir director. He remembers the piano donated by the family of Roger and Randy Hanson. He remembers the original (small) church, built in 1958, and thinks the "new addition" did a lot to provide roominess to the growing community.

Glen misses "the church itself," that original building, which holds so many memories. One thing, however, he does not miss is the random, disorderly way to receiving Communion. "Back in the day," says Glen, "it was a free for all." No lined up communion procession in an orderly fashion like today. Glen likes things organized, and he likes them available. Mr. Westman is going to miss the proximity of the South building to their home. That is his message, loud and clear, with a firm resistance to driving North.

Karen Westman is a gentle and wise woman. She is a Stearns County gal (Welle is her maiden name) who married Tony Lampert, with whom she had three children. Karen and Tony were avid dancers. They cherished good times as well as their faith, and the memories with Tony were all too short as he died of a sudden heart attack at the age of 54. Tony is laid to rest in the St. Henry's Cemetery in Monticello. Losing a spouse is a great heartache, but Karen pressed on with the grace and faith that is apparent when first you meet her.

So how did Karen meet Glen? Matchmaker Eileen Bialka! Eileen worked with Karen at a nursing home, knew Glen was a widower at church, and suggested that the two of them meet. Karen was at first unsure. She said Glen's first phone call was met with strong resistance. Finally, with his usual charm and confidence, Glen convinced her to meet in a safe location, Perkins in Monticello. After a proper courtship, they married 22 years ago at St. Henry's Catholic Church, with a reception at the legendary Monti Club.

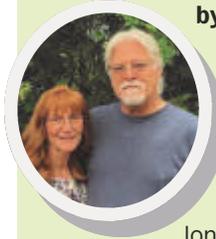
Combined, they have four sons and four daughters. They have grandchildren marrying, having their own children, and getting educations. One grandchild, Jordan, was killed in a tragic car accident. She is buried in the St. Pius X Cemetery close to her grandmother. Karen and Glen share a strong faith, laugh easily, and, until recently, enjoyed retired life by packing up their camper on a Friday morning and living the good life of a MN summer weekend outdoors. Living between Princeton

and Zimmerman in a house built after they were married, Karen and Glen cherish taking care of their lovely property – both are green thumbs – and taking care of their neighbors. The Westmans have blended their lives as they chose a new chapter in life. Together.

Much is the same for the parishes that came together to form Christ Our Light. A new chapter awaits in building one home church. Unity. The blending of two stories into one, much like the Westmans.

Annette & John Swirtz: A Wellspring of Love

by Molly Weyrens, Pastoral Associate



The Swirtz family connection goes way back: As an infant, Annette would go to church with her grandparents who had a cabin on Little Elk Lake. She remembers fondly going to church with her cousins and other family members and filling up three pews. Who knew at the time that they would come full circle back to Zimmerman and be part of the church's history now?! Her parents and grandfather were long-time supporters of the church and they chose St. Pius X Cemetery as their final resting place.

Annette and John moved to Zimmerman in 1986. They had three young kids and became quite involved with activities, especially Religious Education. Annette, along with several others, helped with Confirmation and youth group. There were several years of struggle to get things off the ground, but they managed to stay connected. Regarding memories of staff, they shared that Fr. Zimmer once shared, "I sweat a lot! But don't worry! Nothing's wrong!" They also remembered fun chicken dinners hosted by *Catholic United Financial* (or *Catholic Aid* in those days).

They will miss the proximity of the church as they live only a block away. They like the stained glass windows and frescos and hope those can be reused. They realize it is a challenging transition to close South, but it does not mean an end because our community is moving forward. Annette and John feel that we are a "spirit-filled people and place: warm and welcoming with great music that is a good mix of contemporary and traditional." As we look forward, they hope Christ Our Light continues to flourish and grow to be a "wellspring of love flowing from our parish!"

Catholic United Financial is a not-for-profit financial cooperative that has served Catholics in the Upper Midwest since 1878. The company provides life insurance and retirement products for its 75,000 members and returns a portion of its profits to local communities through programs like the Catholic Schools Raffle, Post-High School Tuition Scholarship, Gather4Good® service events, and more. Based in St. Paul, Minn., Catholic United helps its members plan for every step of their life journey.



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Don & Marilyn Schleper: The Church is More than a Building

by Maureen “Mo” Putnam, Director of Music & Liturgy

Since arriving at Christ Our Light almost fourteen years ago, I have had the pleasure of working with a fabulous, dedicated guitarist, a thoughtful friend and a very peaceful, level-headed thinker, Don Schleper. Just when you think you might know someone, you hear their family story and you realize that they are even more amazing! I am sure you will enjoy this glimpse into Don and Marilyn Schleper's family history with St. Pius X and now Christ Our Light Parish.

Marilyn shared that in 1977 they moved to Zimmerman and loved the small country church in the pines. Fr. Zimmer was there at the time, and she appreciated his down to earth approach to life and faith. One of Don's fondest memories was picturing a Mass in this smaller church said by Fr. Zimmer with a young couple leading the music; “I just really enjoyed that small country church feel.” Don also joked that he thought it was so appropriate that the pastor of the church in Zimmerman was named Father Zimmer.

In the same year, the Schleper's built their home West of Zimmerman and began their many years of participation in parish life. Don and Marilyn had their two children, Ashley and Chris, and they made sure that both were baptized and confirmed. While these two were young, Marilyn taught religion and served on the Religious Education Committee. As they became teenagers, Don and Marilyn supported the Youth Group and recalled chaperoning a trip to Stuebenville—North. During these early years, Don also served on Pastoral Council for a couple of terms, but perhaps some of the most memorable experiences were the years Don and the kids were involved in music ministry.

Don said he first worked with Fr. Paul's housekeeper Judy who was leading the music. Then he worked with Sister Giles who did not like to drive at night, thus she put Don and his family in charge of the Saturday evening Mass. So for years Don, Ashley, and Chris alternated with Edie Lesnick playing for Saturday night Mass. Marilyn commented that watching Don and the kids play at church were definitely some of her fondest memories. She said they sang Contemporary Christian music, played guitars and percussion instruments and she was always very proud that Ashley and Chris started playing when they were so young and stuck with it through their

teenage years.

When I asked them about what aspects about the South building they would miss,

Marilyn said she would miss the quick two mile drive to the church. Don commented on the aesthetics of the South building and said that he would miss all the wood, the beams, the ceiling, the openness and airy feel of the worship space. He also would miss the classic solid look of the granite on the outside. However, both agreed that the church is much more than a building. Marilyn stated, “As long as the parish-



ioners, Fr. Kevin and the staff are still with us, it doesn't matter about the building.” Don added, “It is just a building... It becomes a church when it is the place that people gather to worship together, celebrate together, grieve/mourn together, learn together, and share together.”

Their hopes for the new building is for an open, welcoming structure with many windows and a view of nature. They also believe that it will serve as a beacon of hope and unity in this time of such division. A new church and our new location will allow our two communities to become closer. It will also attract new families moving into the area and more goodness will transpire as they make Christ Our Light their home.

Building Project Update

From Fr. Kevin Anderson and Parish Trustees, Don Schleper and Greg Schoen

After several years of informational sessions, a feasibility study, parish meetings, and the success of our initial capital campaign, we are grateful to be taking another monumental step toward the goal to create a centralized worship space. Our priority throughout this process has been to build a new church campus where our vast faith community can be united as we continue to grow, become inspired in faith, connect with nature and bond with neighbors.

The location of the new property is 11604 293rd Ave. Princeton (located in Baldwin Township, one mile east of highway 169 on County Road 9).

The financial generosity through the initial three-year capital campaign allowed us to purchase 107 acres for the new campus, which contains the Parish House and a large pole barn. The campaign also allowed us to address needed improvements to the Parish House, begin construction of a new road onto the land and secure an architect.

We are pleased to report that we have now raised \$2,144,999 in financial commitments and contributions. To date, we have collected \$1,973,299.

In addition, we have negotiated the sale of the Christ Our Light-South. We expect the proceeds of this sale, combined with the proceeds from the sale of the former rectory, to total just under \$1 million for the entire Zimmerman campus. These funds are being held in an interest bearing savings account designated for our future church campus along with funds raised through pledge payments.

Following the initial campaign launched in 2017, this fall, we will kick-off our next capital campaign which is called IGNITE FAITH. This campaign will raise the additional funds to begin construction of the first phase of our new church campus, the social hall. The social hall will serve as our temporary worship space during this phase, as well as being a gathering place for events and the office space for staff.

This entire process is a great mystery. We do not know precisely how it will end. All along, we have been invited to trust the Holy Spirit in this process. Our faith and trust in God require that each of us recognize that we are standing on the shoulders of those who built and renovated the facilities in Zimmerman and Princeton for our benefit.

Now, we are called to accept the challenge of creating a new campus for present and future generations to become disciples of Christ as we live out our Catholic faith. How we choose to respond to this challenge is up to each of us, remembering that anything is possible with God's help and our desire to collectively move forward in faith as we IGNITE FAITH.

Jackie Dehn: Our Merger is like a Marriage

By Jennifer Adams, Communications/Office Assistant

Working in the Church over the years, I am always grateful for those who actively participate... who by their involvement create opportunities for others to get involved.

Jackie Dehn became a member of St. Pius X in 1989 after she and her first husband, Rick Slayton were married. Jackie shared fond memories of the Sacraments their children celebrated there. She also shared the hardship that she and her family faced in 2001 at the loss of her father and her husband that same year.

When St. Pius X and St. Edward's first twinned back in 2009, my role was in youth ministry, I would coordinate opportunities for our parish youth to get involved in the life of the church. One of our earlier events was a lock-in, and with events such as this, volunteers are essential. As a St. Edward's native, I knew all of the North families and who to call to help, but South families were pretty new to me. So with a suggestion from St. Pius X faith formation director, Noreen Olson, and knowing the Slayton girls, who were some amazing involved teens from South, I got to know this incredible parent, parishioner and willing lock-in chaperone.

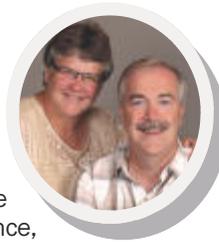
Even though her kids did not necessarily want her to chaperone this time, because there was a need, she did. During that overnight event she would meet a gentleman from St. Edward's who was also chaperoning, Dennis Dehn, and discover just how much they had in common - that he had lost his wife in 1999 and was raising three children close in age to her children.

Jackie remembers relating our parish merger as that of a marriage... as two churches becoming one. Sharing how there will be happy times and hard times.

It seems only fitting that a year after that lock-in, Dennis proposed to Jackie in front of the altar at COL-South, and were later married in that very space in 2015 (with the reception at COL-North). She shared her love for the crucifix at COL-South and that it

reminds her how Christ is such a guiding force and focus for her life.

Jackie wants to see our parish continue to be a place where one feels peace, acceptance, a spirit of welcome, and of love.



A Church is More than a Building.

A Church is many special parts with many special gifts... all unique, all one. It is a community of Disciples to welcome all with the love of Jesus.

A place of Joy.

A place of sadness.

A place of support.

A place of hope.

A place of love.

- Jackie Dehn

Eileen Bialka: A Spirit of Welcome

by Fr. Kevin Anderson, Pastor

Eileen Bialka and her husband Don, moved to the Zimmerman area in 1961. Fr. Joe Linn was Pastor at that time and said that they had a choice to attend the churches in Big Lake or Zimmerman, because he was pastor of both and they lived halfway in between both towns. Fr. Joe said, "You'll be happier in Zimmerman." And when they found out that the feast day for St. Pius X was on August 21, they knew St. Pius X was home, for that is the date of their wedding anniversary.

Eileen became an active member of St. Pius X volunteering for everything, but most notably being one of the founders of *Our Lady's Quilters and Crafters* which have raised thousands of dollars from the sale of their ever popular crafts and quilts.

Eileen and Don lost one son as a toddler, but the other five kids all received their First Communion, Confirmation and Marriage ceremonies at St. Pius X.

What Eileen liked best about St. Pius X Parish (and Christ Our Light) is the welcoming atmosphere. She said, "Church is the friendships you make. It's the comradery. We have always been welcoming. We had no choice for when a new person would appear, we all knew it, and gladly made them feel welcome. That's what Church does."



Randy Hanson: Fond Memories

by Dennis Dehn, Director of Maintenance & Cemetery Groundskeeper



Randy Hanson has been a lifelong member of St. Pius X and Christ Our Light. He celebrated the Sacraments — his first reconciliation, first communion, confirmation, and was married there. And in turn, all of his kids have also celebrated all of their Sacraments there.

When Randy was growing up, he really enjoyed going to the two-week summer school religion classes each year. He remembered a time when Mass was held in the basement of St. Pius X, while the upstairs was being built. They used tarps to help keep things dry while they were in the basement. One time it was raining really hard out filling up one of the tarps with water, until it finally dumped, baptizing an entire family! Some of the things about St. Pius X he misses was from before the last addition: going up into the choir loft, and the sounds of the old bell.

Randy sees Christ Our Light as a great place for all to gather to celebrate the good times as well as the sad times. He shared that he would like to see our new Church built like some of the old churches, facing East with some ornate features. It would be nice to have a covered outside shelter to hold outdoor Masses and celebrations.

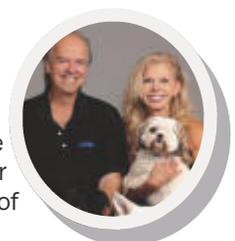
Steve & Sandy Dank: God Hears Me Better in the Front

by Tammy Creasy, Finance Coordinator

The Danks moved to Zimmerman in 2000. They have been active in the parish and officially registered as parishioners in 2008. They remember feeling like city people coming into a more rural community.

Experiencing struggles with their home. Sandy recalls how impactful it was to just sit and pray in the sanctuary at St. Pius X. Being a small town girl, Sandy felt quite comfortable in the back row for quite some time. A day came when she started to believe... "God may hear me better if I am in the front!" T.J. Harvey, former Pastoral Associate, encouraged Sandy to get involved. Sandy began lecturing at Masses and continues to do so to today!

Steve and Sandy are involved in the community, hosting fundraising events for *Passing the Bread*, and Steve is the Chair of the Finance Development Team.



Steve notes that the parish is about the people and the care shown to one other as parishioners. "It really comes down to prayer, which happens in and out of the Church building," added Sandy. The Danks hope that as we are coming out of a pandemic, that we can spark a revival with a new church building, and be patient in the process, yet excited, mindful of the commitment needed to make this a reality.



CHRIST OUR LIGHT CATHOLIC PARISH

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Karen Allen: The Importance of Faith Learned

By Teresa Callison, Operations Coordinator

One of the first times I attended Mass at Christ Our Light-South, I remember watching a young woman carefully assisting her father who had some physical limitations, helping him walk forward to Communion. I remember thinking, "Wow, that is a person with a strong faith!" He didn't let his physical condition keep him away from the Eucharist. And I also noted how sweet it was that someone was taking the time to bring him to Mass. I had no idea that day that within a couple years, I would start working for this parish and get to know that young woman and more of her story.

It was Karen (Jochim) Allen and her father, Bob Jochim, former custodian at COL-South, who I had watched sweetly walk up to Communion that day. I got to know Karen when she'd stop by the parish office in Zimmerman on her way to work at *Papa's Italian*.

As we approached the decommissioning of South, I was able to sit down with Karen and ask her to share her memories at South. Karen was baptized at St. Pius X in 1986 and her father instilled the importance of faith in her right from the beginning. She recalled going to church as a family and all the work that went into preparing to make her First Communion. Her most recent Sacrament was also made in the COL-South building: the Sacrament of Marriage. Karen and her husband Michael were the first couple to get married last year after COVID restrictions were lifted and actually were also the last couple to be married in that building.

While she is sad to see the church building close, she is excited to see the new building be built. She is hopeful for a larger space to accommodate more people and not have to overflow into the basement on holidays. She will always hold dear the memories that her dad, Bob, helped her create as she grew in her faith life and looks forward to continuing to grow in her faith journey with her parish family.



Karen Allen with her late father, Bob Jochim.



inside this issue >>>

Throughout this edition of our parish newsletter, staff members took time to interview and discover the stories of several members from our faith community who share a special connection with our Christ Our Light—South location, formerly St. Pius X. We hope that these stories will inspire you as we honor our past, celebrate the present, and look to the future for our growing faith community.

Contact us at **763-389-2115** | or visit **www.christourlightmn.org**