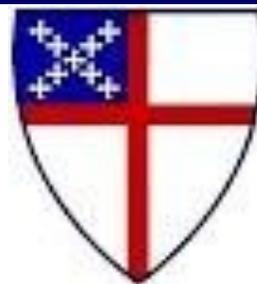


St. Matthew's Episcopal Church



Issue 126

March 16, 2016

The following article appeared in the February 2016 issue of Churchwork. It is here re-printed for those who may have missed it. I encourage you to check out the Churchwork article as well; there are many beautiful photos by Karen Mackey which accompany the article.

On November 11, 2010, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Houma burned to the ground. Nearly five years later, on October 29, 2015, Bishop Thompson consecrated our beautiful new church, gloriously risen from its ashes. The church, like a crowning jewel, was the last thing built in an integrated complex of three brand new structures consisting of school classrooms, our parish hall, and the church itself.

St. Matthew's was honored to host the ECW's Annual convention in May of 2015, at which point the church was nearing completion. We were so delighted that so many of our friends from across the Diocese were able to come see what was then the nearly completed project. Others of you were able to come during our grand opening festivities later, in December. On both occasions, Karen Mackey captured in her beautiful photographs so much of the beauty and splendor of our new church. I'm grateful for her beautiful photographs, and for her help sharing our joy with our Diocesan family. You have all been so very generous and supportive; first, during our loss and now--years later--in our great joy and celebration.

I've been asked to share a few thoughts about our experience. This issue of Churchwork is particularly focused on our church buildings, and upon a consideration of how our churches relate to our mission to "Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom." We at St. Matthew's are in the unique position of having been about the business of proclaiming the Good News within a beautiful old church, then for a few years with no church at all, and now with a brand new church that still has its new church smell. So I welcome the opportunity to share with you a few things we've learned along the way.

For some reason I remember so vividly a question a priest asked me years ago as I was being interviewed by the Commission on Ministry. I was asked to describe how I "pictured" myself as a parish priest, should I be ordained as such. So I said something about seeing myself serving in a small town, maybe, with a big white church, and maybe some rolling hills thrown in. The priest scoffed. And then he said, "What if the reality is your church is a trailer somewhere in the inner city?" I assured him I'd serve there just as faithfully! In retrospect, I think he was trying to impress upon me the distinction between "church" as we might see it in our mind's eye—as some idealized, maybe overly sentimental image---and "church" as Christ's gathered people, proclaiming the Good News to all sorts and conditions of people, in all sorts and conditions of places.

Continued on page 2...

Our experience at St. Matthew's this past few years has led me to a deeper sense of the ambiguity that lies at the root of this whole question of church buildings. A beautiful church is a very good thing, and can help us point to Christ and proclaim the Good News. But a beautiful church can also be a dangerous thing. This shouldn't surprise us too much because it's true of all very good and beautiful things, which if not kept in right perspective, can so easily lead us into error. Years ago when I was newly ordained a friend gave me a copy of a book called, The Spire, written by William Golding. It tells the story of a cathedral dean who set out to build a bigger, better, taller cathedral spire. He believed, at first, that he was doing so in order to glorify God. He keeps telling himself and others that very thing, but in the end, when it all literally comes crashing down, it becomes apparent that the spire had become a monument to his own ego. The moral is that all monuments to ego crumble in the end! So, when I talk to people about our new church, I usually emphasize that we're all trying real hard not to be too proud of it! And that's the truth....to God alone be the glory.

So what are some of the things we have learned along the way by having, then losing, then gaining once again a magnificent church? The first lesson came as the ashes of the fire were still smoldering. The first thing we all learned is that we are not alone. The fire was so sudden and so violent; the destruction was total. We found ourselves held up (almost literally at times) by our wider church family, our wider community, and by countless prayers and words of consolation. The experience of being picked up and carried awhile by others when you've been knocked flat on your back is unlike any other. It was such an experience of the grace of God coming to us through our brothers and sisters in Christ. I will always be grateful for that experience and for the way it deepened my sense of God's grace-and provision in times of loss and sadness.

After a few months of working through the crisis, we began to experience more deeply the true nature of church. We were all very attached to the church that burned, but we began to realize that St. Matthew's isn't the church building, but rather the people with whom we worship and pray each Sunday. This sounds like a stale cliché or a pious platitude, but for us it became a new way of being church. A few months ago at a Diocesan workshop, our Senior Warden put it so well. He was describing what the past four years or so has been like: "We've become the best church ever since we lost our church. And I worry that when we get our new church, we'll go back to being like the old church."

Another important reason for this shift in focus was that we began worshipping all together at a single Sunday service. This built relationships that might otherwise have never been formed as the two churches within the church became one. We have been deeply enriched by this. In fact, we've chosen to continue to worship together at a single service, unless or until we outgrow the capacity of the new building. I'm absolutely convinced that what we give up in terms of personal preference and convenience, we gain tenfold by being together in a more diverse, interdependent congregation.

The experience of building our beautiful new church has been an awesome one, and in so many ways so very formative. There is much I used to take for granted, but never will again! My hope and aim now is that we will do everything we can to wear it out! To open the doors wide, to reach out to people in need of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and to daily touch and enrich the lives of our Day School students. The building and everything in it is for that sole purpose.

The Very Rev. Craig Dalferes, Rector

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church & School

Announcements:

NEWS FROM THE TECH MISSION FIELD

Highlighted this week is a short article written by Becky Becnel on EYC's use of technology for outreach available here: http://bit.ly/EYC_Remind

Very close to completion is the ability to receive a weekly summary of calendar events through email. The usefulness of this email for outreach will be valued by the accuracy and availability of information submitted.

So....
Don't forget to post your SME events here: http://bit.ly/SME_CC_submit, and check on SME events here: http://bit.ly/SME_Calendar.

To God Be the Glory!
Jay C. Theriot
Computing Through Christ, because "I can do all things through Christ" Philippians 4:13, NKJV
<http://stmatthewshouma.org> || <http://smetechguild.org>



St. Matthew's
Episcopal School

ENROLLING NOW

New preschool program for 3 year olds opening 2016-2017 school year

Preschool through 7th grade

www.StMattsSchool.com

St. Matthew's Episcopal School does not discriminate in regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.

SMEC Website:

www.stmatthewshouma.org

Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana

www.edola.org

SMES Website:

www.stmattsschool.com



**St. Matthew's
Episcopal Church**

Sunday Service 10:00am

Nursery & Youth Programs

Prayers & Thanksgivings

Barbara & Alex S., Kathy, Margaret, Frances, Wilma, Ingree, Andr e, Sharon, Sybil, Marian, Johanna, Emily, Rocelle, Warren, Harold, Phil and Shirleen, Pete & Paula, Russell, Jennifer, Hunter, George, Delores, Barney, Flo, Ray, Louise, Gerard, David, Denise, Jeanie, Steven, Genevieve, Robin & baby, Herman, Grady & Teresa, Kim & baby, Brittany, Susan, Jane, Janet, Cher, Caysen, Vivian, Flavia & Charlie, Annabell, Charles, Hannah, Steven & Samantha, Mick, and our Partner-In-Mission sister parish, San Jose in Honduras. We give thanks and pray for St. Matthew's Episcopal School, S. Myers McAllister, Head of School, members of the Board, faculty, staff and students, our Parish Vestry and Building Committee.

Happy Birthday!

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 2-JoAnne Plessala | 15-Allison Forest |
| 6- Noel Stiel | 15-Kirsten Bazet |
| 7-Sally Ellender | 17- Lynn Kelley |
| 7-Wyatt Rushing | 18- Sinclair Buquet |
| 8-Danae' Himel | 19-Janie Rhymes |
| 9-Kaitlyn Clark | 21-Lona Smith |
| 10-Madeline Ford | 22-Mary Ellen Dupont |
| 13-Andree' Alexander | 22-Shirley Use' |
| 14-Julio Medina | 22-Pam Duncan |
| 14-Cassia Carmichael | 26-Buddy Daisy |
| 15-Ray Rhymes | |

Happy Anniversary!

- 5-Julio and Rina Medina
- 5-Lee and Debbie Stiel

BIRTHDAY PRAYER

Watch over your child, O Lord, as his days increase; bless and guide him wherever he may be. Strengthen him when he stands; comfort him when discouraged or sorrowful; raise him up if he falls; and in his heart may your peace which passes understanding abide all the days of his life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SCHEDULE:

Wednesday, March 16 – Hilda Blanchard

March 20, 2016

TEAM 3

Eucharistic Ministers	Alex Ostheimer, Sandra Deroche
Lector	Jessica Blair
Acolyte	Charles Dalferes
Eucharistic Visitor	Emilie Daye (visit Kathy Ryan, Wilma Belviy)
Ushers	George Drury, Karen Chauvin, Tina West
Vestry Member on Duty	Jay Theriot
Altar Guild	Sandy Ostheimer, Karen Kelly
Flower Guild	No Flowers
Hospitality	Sybil Webb

Wednesday, March 23 – Hilda Blanchard

March 27, 2016 – Easter Sunday

TEAM 4

Eucharistic Ministers	Jay Theriot, Kathy Theriot
Lector	Becky Becnel
Acolyte	Hali Theriot
Eucharistic Visitor	Beulah Rodrigue (visit Ingree Guedry, Margaret Shaffer)
Ushers	Sharon Pontiff, Glenn and Jessica Blair
Vestry Member on Duty	Sybil Webb
Altar Guild	Gail Duhe'
Flower Guild	All Flower Guild Members
Hospitality	Debby Fortier



Come enjoy an evening of amazing works of art from the students, faculty, and staff at SMES, along with works of art from community leaders, families, and friends. These masterpieces will be on exhibit for silent and live auction. Guests are invited to bid on VIP Experiences, reserved parking and seating for school events, Teacher Treasures, and more!

Thursday, April 28, 2016 6 – 8 PM
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church & School Parish Hall
243 Barrow Street | (985) 872-5573
www.StMattsSchool.com/art-under-the-oaks
Tickets : \$5 (entry & door prize chance included)
Current SMES students admitted at no charge!

Patron Party 5 – 6 PM

signature cocktails • hors d'oeuvres • early bidding • complimentary childcare during party • \$25 ticket also includes entrance into art show and door prize chance

For details on the event, to donate art or services, or become a sponsor, contact Kelly Phillips.
(985)872-5573
kelly.phillips@stmattshouma.org

Silent Auction 6 - 7:15 PM
Chorister Performance 6:30 – 6:45 PM
NEW! Live Auction 7:15 – 7:30 PM
Checkout 7:30 PM
Event Ends 8 PM
Live Music, Food, & Fun all night!

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT THE SMES ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN.