

ALL ARE WELCOME

St. Matthew Catholic Church



A circular graphic with a blue border. Inside, the number '70' is written in a large, white, serif font, with the word 'years' in a smaller, white, cursive font below it. A white cross symbol is positioned below 'years'. To the left of the cross is the year '1949' and to the right is '2019'. Below the cross, the text 'St. Matthew Catholic Church' is written in a white, serif font, and below that, 'Diverse Traditions One Mission' is written in a smaller, white, cursive font.

OUR HISTORY

- 1949** Parish established due to overcrowding at Blessed Sacrament, St. Dominic, and St. Bernard; 4,000 parishioners registered in first year
- 1949-67** Msgr. Charles Yingling (pastor)
- 1951** School and convent buildings completed
- 1951** School opened
- 1956** Nearly 12,500 parishioners/4,500 families
- 1958** Rectory building and school addition completed
- 1962** Church building completed
- 1966** Social Action committee formed
- 1966** Greater Northwood Community Council formed with leadership from St. Matthew
- 1966-1980** Msgr. Clare O'Dwyer (pastor)
- 1967** First Folk Mass offered
- 1972** Women invited to serve as lectors
- Late 1970's** Christ Renews His Parish implemented
- 1977** St. Matthew is a founding parish of BUILD
- 1980-1984** Fr. Jack Collopy (pastor)
- 1984-1990** Fr. Wayne Funk (pastor)
- 1989** St. Matthew and St. Thomas More School merge to form Cardinal Shehan School
- 1990-Present** Fr. Joseph Muth (pastor)
- 1991** Gospel Choir is formed
- 2000** Immigration Outreach Service Center (IOSC) opens its doors
- 2001** Comboni Missionary Sisters come to Baltimore, residing at St. Matthew
- 2003** Labyrinth was built as an Eagle Scout project of Ben DeLisle
- 2005** Addition completed to church building including improvements to hall
- 2010-Present** Fr. Joseph Muth assigned as pastor at Blessed Sacrament
- 2010** LEAD Ministries formed
- 2011** Northeast Nine convenes with nine parishes in the City's northeast corridor.
- 2013** Seven parishes - Blessed Sacrament, Most Precious Blood, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, Little Flower, and St. Matthew - form the Northeast Catholic Community (NECC) to collaborate on addressing the faith needs of those living in Northeast Baltimore.
- 2014** Faith Formation Center opens and Faith Formation Director hired through the collaboration of the NECC
- 2014** Partnership in faith against hate formed with the Ahmadiyya Mosque congregation
- 2017-Present** Faith communities of St. Matthew and Blessed Sacrament collaborate to offer Holy Day services
- 2019** Fr. Joseph Muth celebrates 45 years in the priesthood
- 2019** Parish celebrates 70 years

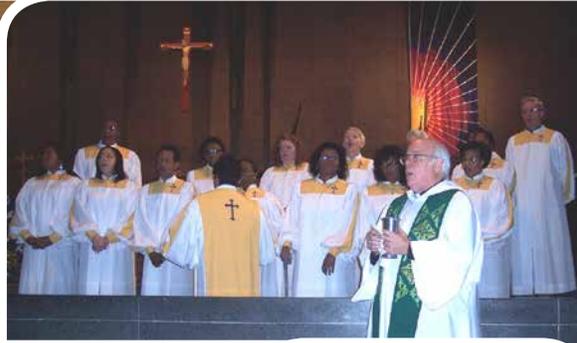


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WELCOME

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

All Are Welcome!! This is the name of a song we sing at church. It was written by a church musician from Minnesota named Marty Haugen in 1989. Many denominations use this song, and, despite its welcoming spirit, it has created much controversy in some communities.

At St. Matthew we use this song because it speaks to the congregation that we share. We historically describe St. Matthew as being a Caucasian parish from 1949 to 1969; Caucasian and African American from 1969 to 1989; and Caucasian, African American, Immigrant, and LGBTQ from 1989 to the present. We know our history and realize that all people were not always welcome in this place. So as the community developed over the years, we had to face our history, and do what we could to reverse any unwelcoming spirits, so that we could become a welcoming community. Now we have people in the congregation from about 47 different countries.

We share our life, our faith, our food, our music, and our families together. It is a place of hope in a world that tries to divide and separate. On this 70th Anniversary we are grateful for what God has created in us and through us. As we continue to learn from and share with each other, may our children and our children's children maintain this spirit of welcome and hospitality for future generations, or at least the next 70 years (2089!!)

Happy Anniversary Everyone!!

Love and Prayers,



Fr. Joe Muth

PREFACE

At the first meeting of volunteers to discuss this book, we all kept circling back to the same words - *pathways, journey, life of a church community and how it changes*. As we started compiling the names of people, events, and ministries, the list seemed endless. We knew we could only capture a glimpse of this beautiful mosaic. This book is a snapshot of the personal and shared journeys that capture our community's diversity, our will, and the varied ways we profess and walk our faith every day.

We hope the stories in this book, though just a fraction of the stories we could tell, testify to how this faith community has impacted each of us, the Baltimore community and our world,

and how each one of us can make a positive change in the world with our "All Are Welcome" spirit!

Thank you to all who answered the call to write or edit, be interviewed, or share a photo. Your creativity and character are the embodiment of who we are at St. Matthew. A special thanks to Kathleen O'Toole who put in time above and beyond and to our fundraising team who made sure we had the funds to publish this book.

Kelley Ray, *Anniversary Book Chair*
Mychelle Farmer, *70th Anniversary Chair*

Joan Nugent

Joan and John Nugent joined St. Matthew in the early 1960s. Their children were baptized here and the children attended St. Matthew School. Joan fondly remembers when Masses were held in the school because the church was still being built, with woods all around.

The Northwood community was very heavily Catholic, and the residents were mostly white. Joan remembers, "The school had two shifts to accommodate all of the children, and all the parents were involved with the church and school activities."

Joan and John participated in Christ Renews His Parish, a national effort in the late 1970s that included retreats for women and men. In the spirit of Vatican II it invited lay leaders to take part in all the ministries of the Church. Joan went on to serve as a cantor, Sodality leader and rectory volunteer.

Joan recalls a series of pastors whose connections to parishioners and the community varied. As with many churches, Joan had her favorite priests, including Fathers Collopy and Funk. Then in 1990 came Fr. Joe, "who makes everyone welcomed."

In recent years, Joan experienced the generosity of St. Matthew, when the parishioners and Fr. Joe were present during her husband John's illness. Fr. Joe was at the hospital and her home with other church members to pray with her and console her family.

Today and tomorrow, Joan wishes that everyone carry with them the blessings and openness from this parish that cares, "There is always someone in the parish that you can go to who will listen to you. If you leave here know that you will always be welcomed back with open arms, because as the hymn tells us, *All are welcomed in this place.*"

Jane Vaeth

When St. Matthew first opened, it was to relieve overcrowding at Blessed Sacrament, St. Bernard, and St. Dominic. Jane and George Vaeth, who lived in Northwood and attended St. Bernard, did as good Catholics did in the 1950s - they changed churches and attended the one in their neighborhood. Or, at least, they tried. At that time, Mass was held in the school auditorium/gym and in the cafeteria and Jane described it as "Awful! Much too crowded." She and George returned to St. Bernard.

A few years later when her first child was almost school age, they returned to St. Matthew to get the family established before he started school there. In the late 50s, as school parents, Jane, Rita Zungailia, and Peggy Crowley organized the school bazaars. Today, Jane continues to volunteer for church fundraising events and for the IOSC Savor the World.

Jane and George were doers, not missing an opportunity to get involved. They attended the first BUILD meeting and were involved in many

city issues. When asked who watched the kids when attending meetings, she replies "my mother, of course." Jane was the biggest vote-getter for many years serving on Parish Council. They had seven children, all of whom attended and graduated from St. Matthew School. "One of my most vivid memories is my entire family sitting in the first row at church," Jane says with a smile.

Jane has seen many priests come and go. She quips, "Some I liked, others I tolerated." When Fr. Joe came in 1990, she was waiting for him to do somersaults as he ran up and down the aisle giving his homily. Her children were surprised she liked his way of preaching. She did and still does.

"It was so crowded in the beginning I didn't even want to go to Mass here, now you can't get rid of me." And so the story began and continues today for Jane.

Teresa & Dominic Brocato

Teresa and Dominic Brocato first became members of St. Matthew parish 60 years ago when they moved into the house on Wadsworth Way, where they raised their two daughters and where they still live today.

Their daughters attended St. Matthew School and Teresa was a “milk mother” in the school cafeteria. The young mothers became such close friends that for years they would get together and go out to lunch, even after some of them had moved.

In the 1960s and 70s the neighborhood began to change; Dominic and Teresa stayed put. “Where would we go?” Teresa says. “And we have great neighbors.” They brag about how their neighbors, now mostly African American, have looked out for them as they got older. And there is still a St. Matthew parish presence on the block as “Owen and Joy Charles and the Kambics live right down the street.”

And the parish changed too. Teresa emphasizes, “It’s really more welcoming now.” She is appreciative that someone suggested her to become a Eucharistic minister and she has faithfully served in that role for many years.



The Milk Mothers (2003)

She and Dominic recall a recent visit to their home by Pascal and Flora Udumukwu after Dominic was hospitalized. “Flora is a nurse at Good Sam and she had come to see him when he was in the hospital. Then they came by the house with this beautiful fruit basket. It was so kind of them.”

When asked what message they would like to send to those in the pews 10 years from now, or to our young people, Dominic pipes up first. “They need to know they can stand up for their values and what they believe. They don’t need to go along with the crowd.” Teresa says simply, “This is a loving community. Keep welcoming the outsiders.”



Barbara Reid

In 1977, Barbara Reid prayed to the Blessed Mother to give her a Catholic Church to attend with her family. She tried out all the Masses at St. Matthew to see which one she liked, and always sat in the back. She then moved to the middle of the church, still on the St. Joseph side. Soon she felt drawn to the Blessed Mother side where she believes Mary led her to the fourth pew.

"I first met Faye Perry, Linda Murphy, Rosie Douglass and Grace Byerly. It was their welcome that made me feel a little more at home." She continued to pray for more of that feeling of belonging. More African Americans were attending Mass, and in Barbara's experience, not all St. Matthew parishioners were as welcoming.

As time went by, Barbara experienced a change of heart with those who seemed unwilling to receive her. The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother led her, during the Sign of Peace, to

express love for one particular gentleman, and others, with a big hug. She sat at Mass with Eunice Orange and says that "Eunice's family is my extended family...another reason I'm still a church member."

The feeling of truly belonging to a church family came for Barbara during the most difficult times in her life. "We were shown such love and compassion when my husband and son passed away. It was then I realized how God sends what you need to get you through life's challenges."

In time, Barbara taught CCD and RCIA for adults, joined the Liturgy Committee, and became especially close to those with whom she worked in the St. Vincent de Paul Society - Mickey and Dick Hallinger, John Hearn, Priscilla Mitchell, Ed Sommerfeldt, and Ramon Thompson. She is now an active member of the Sodality and a Eucharistic Minister. "These are precious times for me and I hope for the people I touched."

Wannetta Thompson

"I was waiting for the congregation to march us out the side door," came the words from Wannetta Thompson, the founding director of our Gospel Choir.

Wannetta, a Christian raised in the Baptist and Pentecostal Holiness faith, came to St. Matthew in the late 1970s with her husband, Ramon, a practicing Catholic. They shared their time between St. Matthew and her church, United Baptist. She wanted to understand the faith better when she decided to raise her children Catholic.

"I attended RCIA led by Sr. Mary Beane to educate myself." It was while attending the RCIA meetings that Sr. Mary learned of her gospel musical background. It was Sr. Mary's dream to have a gospel choir, led by Wannetta.

In 1990, parishioners started talking about forming a gospel choir. Sue Rovnak, a Parish Council member, exclaimed that "it will be done!"

Others like Carolyn Grayson and Ed and Nikki Sommerfeldt also encouraged the formation of the choir. Sr. Mary's dream became a reality in 1991.

Unfortunately, there wasn't a week that went by without someone commenting, "go back to your church." And in response, Wannetta would say to herself, "God told me that this is where I'm supposed to be, and I believe in being obedient to God's direction."

When she speaks of Gospel music, there is such joy in her voice. "Gospel music is supposed to touch the heart, mind and soul. It reminds you that God is there for you, always has a message and is easy to remember, like *Jesus Christ is the Way*."

In December 2014, Wannetta stepped down as choir director to start her own ministry. She went on to say, "St. Matthew will always be my home."

RCIA

When Jackie Said began searching for a church home, she visited St. Matthew and was impressed with Fr. Joe and felt welcomed by many members.

Jackie's family is a blend of faiths and backgrounds, and so the multi-cultural pride and the "all are welcome" message of our community was essential. "I grew up Protestant and attended Catholic schools. My husband and daughter are Muslim, and our family is open to all faiths." Jackie chose the RCIA program at St. Matthew to begin her faith development journey.

Years earlier, Mychelle Farmer was a RCIA participant when Rosie Douglas and Alfred Li-Young led the effort. "It was lots of work, but we encouraged each other."



Besides orienting candidates to essential elements of church teachings, Rosie encouraged RCIA candidates to become active members of the St. Matthew community. Says Mychelle, "I know that three [of our class] became altar servers and at least one is a Eucharistic Minister."

Sr. Andre, a Comboni Missionary Sister, took on the leadership of RCIA in 2007. "The RCIA experience gives candidates an opportunity to reflect on the many challenges of daily life and to find ways to improve the communities in which they live and work," she explains.

"St. Daniel Comboni was a great missionary, sharing God's message of hope and love to all. With RCIA I can show God's love, so candidates know we are all children in God's universal family."



School Sisters of Notre Dame

It was a warm September 5, 1951. St. Matthew Catholic School opened its doors for the first day of classes. Ready to greet all the children were the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The children were eager to meet the "Sisters" and thus began their long legacy of education at St. Matthew.

Sister Patricia Shea, SSND, was the last School Sister to be principal, serving in the 1980s. It seems Sr. Patricia was in the right place at the right time. She comments how she "likes change" and thrives in the process. During her tenure, there were three different pastors of the parish – talk about change! But the biggest change occurred when St. Thomas More School merged with St. Matthew in 1986, to become Cardinal Shehan School.

Sister recalls all the twists and turns of the transition as being exciting as well as painful. Of course, practical matters involved change of

uniforms, re-aligning tuition rates, hiring all the teachers from St. Thomas More, and orienting the new students to their new surroundings.

Among the harder tasks were helping two different school groups (and their families) to adjust. Sr. Patricia was keenly aware of the emotional loss felt by some, and the need for others to offer a warm and welcoming hospitality. She was dedicated to facilitating this transition, and with prayer, wisdom and hard work, the new Cardinal Shehan School was born. As the demographics of the neighborhoods changed, so did the school's diversity, which flourishes in the school we know today.

"The blessing ceremony of the new school, presided over by Bishop John Ricard, was so special and healing. The School Sisters will always consider our ministry at St. Matthew parish as an honored and treasured place in the history of our community."

Oblate Sisters of Providence

Sister Rita Michelle Proctor, OSP, sums up the memories of her 14 years at Cardinal Shehan School with one word - JOY!

These years of service occurred in different time frames, in different positions, but "all in God's plan for me. Cardinal Shehan was one of the best schools in all my experiences," exclaims Sister. The school resources (i.e., the gym, cafeteria, and spacious grounds) were more than she had elsewhere. With these amenities, along with a committed faculty, and a deep trust in God, "we could get things done."

Sr. Rita Michelle's first time at Cardinal Shehan was as assistant principal, in the 1990s. She then was in administration at another regional Catholic school for five years, until it closed. Upon her return to Cardinal Shehan as principal in 2010, "it was like a homecoming for me, and a healing for me after the closure of the previous school."

What pleases her most is that the school still claims its goal of "peace-making" (which was a goal for the Middle-States Accreditation) and was still strongly practiced upon her return years later as principal. She recalls a parent telling her that during a family dispute, the young student spoke up and said, "Mom, you're not a peacemaker." How wonderful that such an understanding and practice of peace-making extends beyond the school walls!

Sr. Rita Michelle retains fond memories of her times at Cardinal Shehan. She strongly believes in collaboration and states that we all work together to achieve success. She so much appreciated Fr. Joe's support and his listening ear as they served the parish together. Sister still hears from some of the students and families after her departure in 2015.

As she currently serves as the Superior General of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, she thinks back to her tenure at Cardinal Shehan with JOY!

Fametta Jackson

I trust in the LORD with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding. In all my ways I acknowledge Him and He directs my paths (Proverbs 3:5-6). Fametta Jackson, current principal of Cardinal Shehan School, says this scripture is how she has chosen to live her life.

Fametta strongly states, "As I walked through the halls and every classroom after I was hired, I realized that I have officially come home. More than 30 years ago, the foundation of my personal relationship with the Lord was fostered and cultivated in these very classrooms. It was here that I learned that I was a valuable gift from God. These experiences directed me to gain the perspective of Catholic education over the years in different capacities - as a teacher in Catholic schools, as a parent of children in Catholic schools, and now, finally, as a leader of a Catholic school.

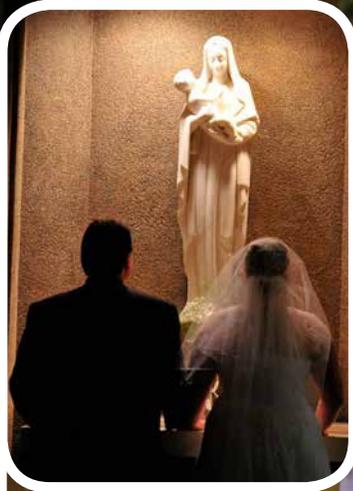
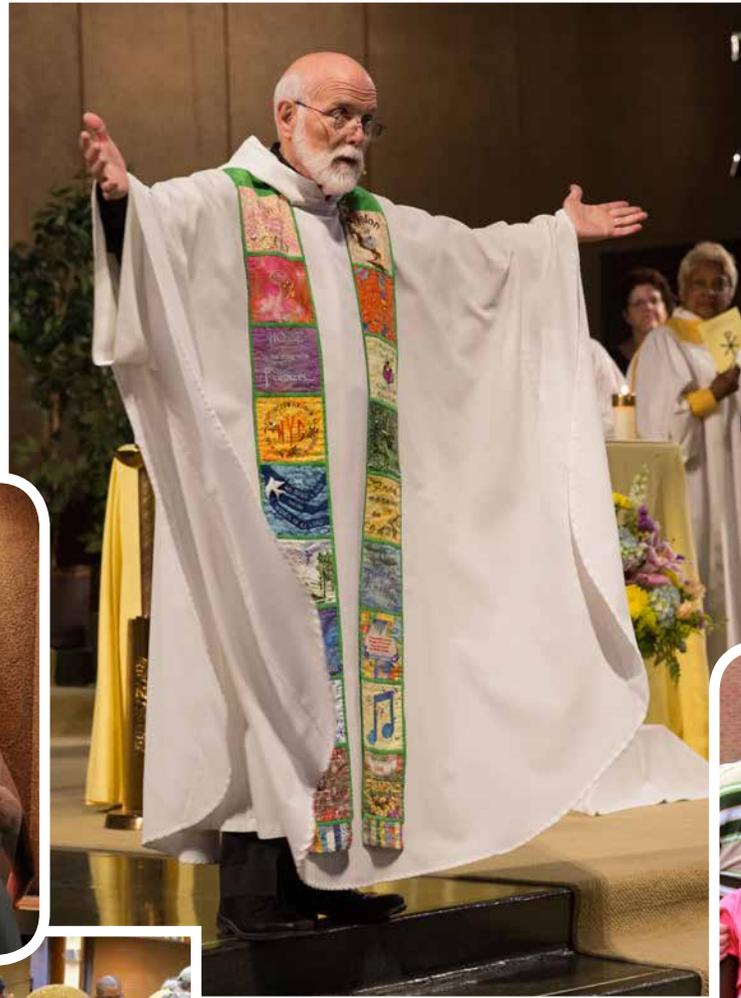
"One of my goals for Cardinal Shehan School is to continue developing peaceful children for our world through the implementation of the CSS's successful Peace Program. The second goal is to assist all students to reach their fullest potential in a student-centered learning environment. This supports Pope Francis' vision that all Catholic school students will be equipped with the necessary 21st century skills needed to be successful in this technological age. The third goal is to build, within our school, Christ disciples and change agents for our world. These goals will help our students become academically, emotionally and spiritually confident,



and will help build and strengthen that personal relationship with the Lord, which is so much needed in one's life.

"For over three decades, St. Matthew parish has been my pillar in getting to know and serve Christ. In a word, this parish and school are my family."







Gloria & Roman Clark

In 1989 when Fr. Funk was pastor, Gloria and Roman Clark were searching for a church home for their family. At the time, their children attended St. Pius X School, so naturally the family had been attending that church. "We didn't really feel comfortable there, so we began visiting other churches in the area," states Gloria. Fortunately, they found out about a church called St. Matthew, just 10 minutes away, that Gloria insisted they visit. Little did they know that 30 years later, they would continue to remain a part of the St. Matthew faith family.

Roman reflects, "It was the warm feeling that we felt. Being young people we looked around seeing many older parishioners ...we felt they were accepting us as possibly the new faces of St. Matthew."

The diversity they experienced after attending only one service was like no other - a diversity not only in the people of St. Matthew but in the ideas that revolved around the community. They love how, unlike other churches, during the sign of peace at St. Matthew, everyone walks

around, and they don't just speak to the person next to them. This, along with Fr. Joe's messages, instilled in Gloria and Roman a passion for prayer and action that they never experienced before.

From an amazing priest to the vibrant church atmosphere where "all are welcome," St. Matthew offered the Clark family something that no other church did. To the future St. Matthew community, especially the youth, Gloria and Roman "hope for greater involvement in the church itself, especially in the choir and folk group." This way St. Matthew will be able to offer others the same thing that it did them - that is, a home.



Myrtle Stanley

As one of our more seasoned church members, Myrtle Stanley's faith life didn't start at St. Matthew. Born a Lutheran, Myrtle Stanley attended St. Ann with her husband, Theodore, after they enrolled their son at the school. She felt joy in that church so she attended RCIA to convert. "It was a glorious time!"

Myrtle and Theodore attended St. Ann when Fr. Joe was pastor. She first met him at the Women's Ministry retreat. When he left St. Ann for St. Matthew, she says, "the church changed after he left." She tried other churches but didn't feel as if, "when two or three are gathered, I [God] am there." So she came to St. Matthew. She says that the Catholic Church isn't as narrow

as people think; it's how people interpret it and she clearly loved the way it was interpreted at St. Matthew.

She led RCIA for a time and described those who were new to the Catholic faith as bringing their "gifts," and that "a new person brings new light to the church."

The faith journey she has traveled is long. She turned 90 this year, and through it all she continues to love teaching about our Lord and does so to other seniors through an online bible study program. "Our world would change overnight if everyone would see God. Our problems today are man-made."

Pete McIver

Pete McIver first came to St. Matthew as Fr. Pete in the summer of 1991. Ordained a priest in 1986, he served as associate pastor with Fr. Joe for three years before deciding to step back from active ministry and marry Debbie. "My marriage to Debbie added a whole new dimension to my life and enhanced my ability to understand the joys and struggles of family life," he says. He hopes one day to return to the active priesthood as a married man.

Pete's work within the St. Matthew community reflects his commitment to the Catholic Church. He served as president of the Pastoral Council from 2001-2004, and then again from 2011-2013. During his first tenure he played a key role in bringing about the renovations of the church to include the elevator, bathrooms, and kitchen. Pete is currently a member of the Finance committee.

He also looked outside the walls of St. Matthew to find ways to bring his ministry to others. In 1999, he began working at Marian House, where he now serves as deputy director. "We were



founded by the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Sisters of Mercy. Marian House provides supportive housing for homeless women," says Pete. Many of these women are coming from incarceration or treatment and Marian House provides the services to help them get back up on their feet.

Pete has shared other talents with the St. Matthew community. As a priest, he co-authored a dramatic presentation of the Stations of the Cross entitled Stations Revisited. A few years ago, he partnered with Lynn Dorsey and other believers from neighboring churches to present it on Good Friday.

Most of all, Pete is grateful for the blessing of participating in such a diverse community.

"It is said that America is most segregated on Sunday mornings. I love the fact that our community is the exception -bringing together so many people of different races, languages, and preferences... because Fr. Joe provides a welcoming environment where everyone can feel at home."

Seder Meal

"A group of St Matthew's parishioners ask my wife, Ruth Crystal, if she would provide the ritual for a Seder as practiced in Jewish homes during the Passover season, which generally overlaps with our Easter season. It has grown every year from a handful to up to 90 participants over the last 25 years reflecting changes in the parish, in our institutions, and in our own growth in faith as a couple."

David Cramer

Sesay Family



My parish at the time was not meeting my spiritual needs. When I came to St. Matthew, the warm reception I received on the first day from the parishioners and the pastor was unbelievable. I was initially a bit uneasy when asked to introduce myself to the entire congregation that day. After my introduction, I received a thunderous applause. This warm reception reminded me of my vibrant parish back home in Sierra Leone. This was what I had been missing since I moved to the United States. My son Emmanuel, 12, says he enjoys the fun part of the Gospel, loves religious education, and enjoys the pizza during family nights. Solanie, 7, loves Fr. Joe and enjoys family night too.

Sarah & Zeb Lohnes

I had joined another Catholic church and was disappointed when the homilies felt full of judgment, not acceptance. After a quick Google search we found a homily by Fr. Joe on embracing the gay community, something that is important to us. We love the social justice mission and message that “we” are the changemakers. Now Zeb and I love the truly authentic sense of community- the long sign of peace at each Mass, the way we learn about, celebrate and pray for each other together. We can’t imagine anywhere else where we could commune with people from dozens of nations and learn about their culture and history. This is the first time I’ve been in a choir and singing while looking out at our diverse, beautiful and inclusive congregation is definitely a highlight of my week.



Faith Donerson



The reason I attend St. Matthew is because I can go to the Altar and take communion and lay my burdens right here. I feel the love of most parishioners and I love this because I have very little family left. I was raised Southern Methodist and I always felt I was being judged. At St. Matthew I feel as though I am being accepted for me as God accepts me. And, I love the way Fr. Joe delivers the Word of God!

Ted Miles

So grateful after months of searching to have found a parish, St. Francis Xavier in NYC, that feels like home having a similar hospitality and commitment to justice as St. Matthew.

Kristi Szczepanski

The reason I love it here at St Matthew is because as a single woman, I am still treated like I belong. I enjoy attending mass amongst the many cultures that come to worship our God. Everyone who walks in can see how welcoming the community makes him or her feel.

Jordan Differding & Pat Cassidy



We decided to come to St. Matthew because of its welcoming and inclusive community! The diversity and culture of St. Matthew church is a rare find and a place where we encounter comfort and a great deal of hospitality, especially as a gay couple of faith. We also appreciate how the gospel message is deeply rooted in a social justice lens that brings the message to a relatable and current day perspective. For St. Matthew this not only shines through during the mass but also through the various ministries, events and members of the church, both young and old.

Diane McCray & Tyrese

Attending St. Matthew allows my granddaughter, Tyrese, to be part of an extremely diversified church community where ALL are truly welcomed! The early learnings provided in the Children’s Liturgy about the teachings of Jesus assist in the establishment of a Christian-based foundation. Hopefully, in time this will lead to the beginning of her spiritual journey.



Sir Austin & Lady Dominica Ejelonu & Family



We have many reasons to come to St. Matthew. We are here to praise our Creator, and to worship and thank God for his mercies and kindness. The children say it is fun and we come to celebrate His goodness, plus they are altar servers.

Colleen & Drew Conkey

I searched “LGBTQ friendly churches in Baltimore” and found St. Matthew. We could not actively be part of a church that openly discriminates against anyone or any group. Additionally, Drew had a disheartening experience with his family’s church, so it was even more urgent we found a community that was welcoming to everyone. I have always wanted to be a part of a church that was based more in what its parishioners do to supports others, instead of whether or not they kneel to pray. After the trash talk on Baltimore, Father Mike helped me to feel empowered to support people even more, instead of retaliating against them for their hateful comments. I felt like a kinder person after we left Mass that day.

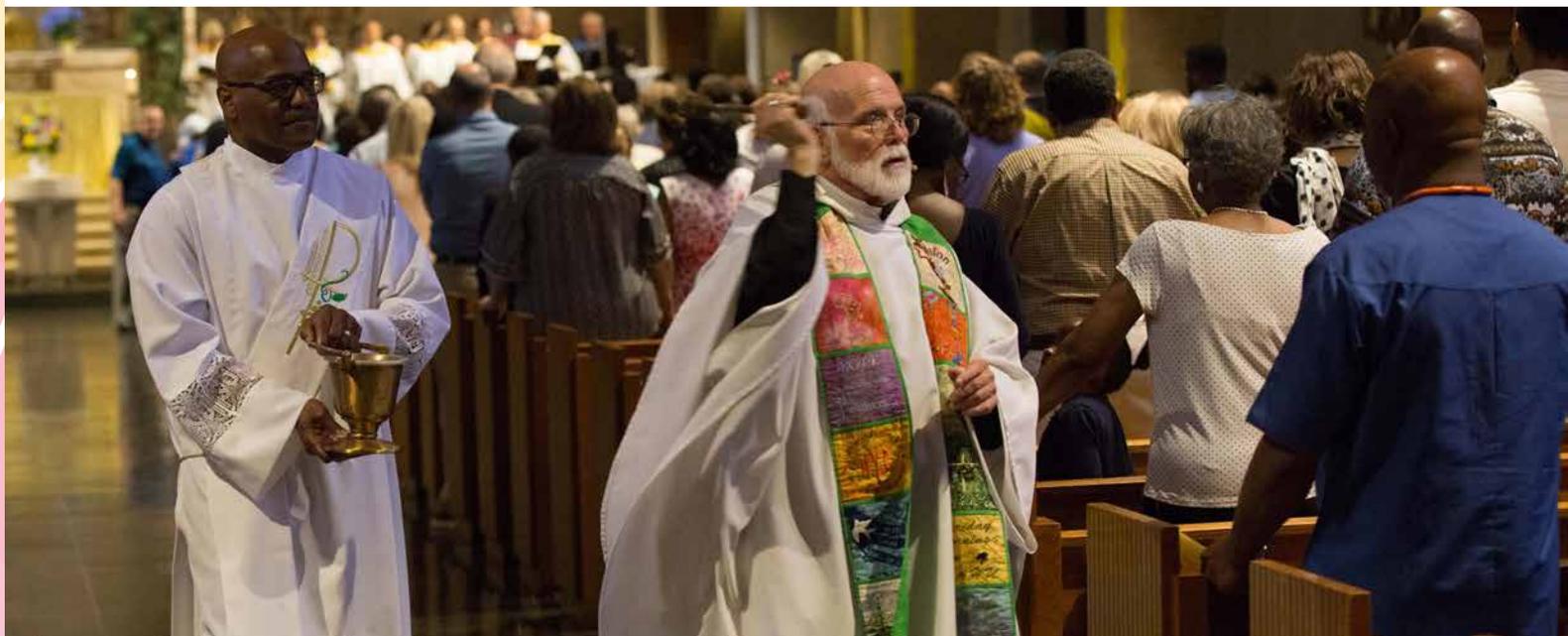
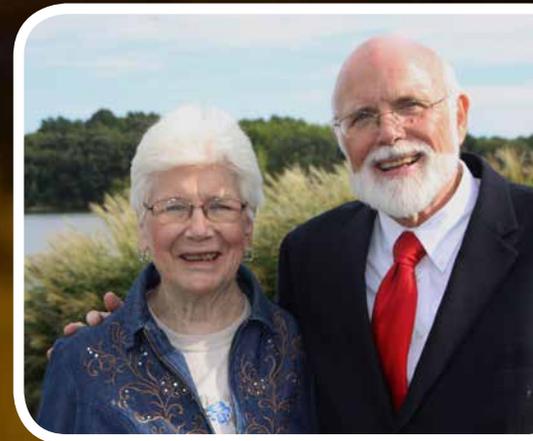


Kathleen Muth

I’ve met so many amazing people from all over the world that I consider my friends. We celebrate and pray with each other. St. Matthew Church is all about seeing the soul of a person, not the color of their skin or their gender, it’s about the person, just as Jesus taught us.

A Journey of Inspiration

Fr. Joseph Muth has been the pastor at St. Matthew for the past 29 years and at Blessed Sacrament for the past nine. Parishioners submitted questions for him to answer, from: "Why did you become a priest?" to "If you could meet with Pope Francis what would you want to discuss?"



In the Beginning

I'm what you call a "Lifer," entering the seminary after 8th grade. In those days every family was expected to have a priest or sister in the family. My brothers have always said, "I'm glad it was you!"

When in high school, I wanted to be a priest to help people, and I still do. During college so much was happening around social justice. Then there was the Second Vatican Council. I watched so many priests and sisters become "change agents." I felt that was something I wanted to do.

Parental Influence

My parents made sure that as a family we were always involved in church. During Lent we prayed the rosary together every night after dinner. So the Catholic influence was very strong in our family life.

In all the parishes I served my parents showed up for special events. I am fortunate to have been given the parents that I had because of their love and devotion to us as a family, and the example they gave for living a faithful, loving life. My parents, Joseph Leo Muth Sr., and Joan Sweeney Muth were married on March 2, 1946 at St. Ignatius Church in Baltimore. My father died on March 14, 1999. My mother died on November 11, 2018.

Preaching Style

When I went to St. Ann's in 1982, it was my first time in a black community, and I had to learn to preach all over again. Black preaching is referred to as "Call and Response," something I had to learn because it was not a part of my cultural or religious heritage. I am forever grateful to the people of St. Ann's for their patience with me.

Biggest Shift in Thinking Over the Years

My ministry is on the edge. I deal with people on the edge of life helping them to hold on and become stronger. You have to go to the edge to help them. This shift in my ministry has been a mental, emotional, and spiritual difference as well as making a life-giving difference.

Long Hours, Many People, a Day of Rest

I don't think anything drives me to be available when a parishioner or a stranger needs my help. That's who I am. God sends me; I need to be open to them. And then try to figure out what I can do to help them. As for rest, I have a day off a week, attend conferences, retreats, days of prayer.

Fighting for Social Justice

I don't expect the things that we are fighting for now to change before I die, but they are worth fighting for. I do it because it's important to be a part of it whether I see it accomplished or not. Dr. Vernon Johns, a civil rights leader, once said, "If you see a good fight, get in it."

The Perfect Church

The perfect church community, the institutional worldwide church, would look like St. Matthew - many different cultures, Caucasian, African American, gay and lesbians, and the whole mix of God's people praying together, eating together, learning together, and sharing life together. Church communities should be a mix of God's people to be more of what the Kingdom should look like.

Meeting with Pope Francis

The first thing I would tell Pope Francis is about St. Matthew and Blessed Sacrament. Then, I would talk about women in church and their importance to the worldwide Church. The prayers we say every week in church call us to be in the image of Jesus in the world. Women reflect that image in their unique way.

We need to be open to the ordination of women. The Second Vatican Council said that the Mass is the central part of parish communities. If that is true, why does the Church accept that some communities only see a priest once every 3-4 months? If the Church is serious that the Eucharist is the central focus, it seems to me that the Church needs to acknowledge the movement of the Holy Spirit and ordain women to the priesthood.

Most Humbling Experience

Walking with those who are dying. Sadness, sorrow and joy at the same time is a beautiful and touching thing that you can't comprehend. I am grateful for those moments.

Greatest Gift Received

The gift of welcoming. I've learned from people that "welcoming" is a precious gift and it stretches me to be wider in my approach, and how we as a community can stretch to become a rich mix of people.

Legacy

If people remember my name that's a good thing. But remembering things we have shared is more important than remembering something particular that I have done.

Read more about Fr. Joe's family, his conversation with the Pope, and much, much more online at:

www.stmatthewbaltimore.org/70th-anniversary/stories

Immigration Outreach Service Center



In 1999, as St. Matthew Church was approaching its Jubilee Year, the church held conversations with parishioners to find out how it should look in the future. "Those house gatherings and meetings with individuals revealed that immigrants from at least 30 different countries were attending St. Matthew," states Owen Charles, IOSC chair. Because of this, immigration became one of five new ministries.

An Immigration Action Team consisting mostly of foreign-born parishioners, identified immigrant leaders who would determine how to implement the new ministry. These leaders and members of Faith Presbyterian and People's Congregation at All Saints Lutheran formed the Immigration Action Committee and from their discussions came the recommendation for an immigration center.

The Immigration Outreach Service Center (IOSC) opened its doors in mid-2000! It was a physical space where immigrants could obtain low-cost immigration services and gather to share their cultures. "More importantly, it was a forum for immigrants to tell their stories in a safe and secure environment," says Owen.

No one could foresee then, the devastating events of 9/11 coming around the corner.

9/11 profoundly changed America's view of immigrants and immigration and presented unexpected challenges for the IOSC. Friends of the IOSC were now unsure about their support and corporations were no longer eager to fund major immigration initiatives. This impacted funding, yet the center continued servicing those who knocked on its door.

In 2005, the IOSC began experiencing a gradual increase in services to refugees and asylum seekers that forced an unexpected change in clients' needs. The change quickly overwhelmed the center's meager resources and led to the temporary closure of its doors in 2012. In response to the closure, the IOSC's Board hosted a retreat including immigrants, grant funders, and donors, to rethink client's needs. Owen

shares, "From the retreat came the 're-visioning' of a more volunteer-driven model of immigration service delivery and a rebranding of the IOSC."

The IOSC re-opened its doors in late 2012 and with a volunteer director, it implemented a tutoring program and began community organizing with BUILD. The organization expanded to five staff, six consultants, and 30+ volunteers. Services provided include tutoring for youth at St. Matthew and the Medfield Community Center, computer literacy for adult women, interfaith gatherings, and donor support from Jewish and Muslim communities and local churches. Services provided include housing, job, and legal referrals.

"We created and convened the Sanctuary Coalition of Central Maryland, a yearly gathering of all Immigration Service Providers in the region, and began community organizing in order to raise immigrant voices to local power," states Pat Jones, director. Senators Van Hollen and Cardin along with city leaders have supported the IOSC.

This year, the IOSC embarked on a strategic and succession planning process. 2020 plans include an ESOL program, financial literacy classes, expanded space, and a computer lab to provide a practice space for immigrants.

Owen's hopes for the future of the IOSC, "We are there, to continue to walk the journey with immigrants, to help them come from the shadows into the light, and to have them change their lives to be productive and full contributors to their community."



Sydney Joseph, Owen's niece, interviewed him to gather background for this story. She says, "I learned a lot about the history of the IOSC and enjoyed being part of sharing their story."

Dave & Nathalie Piraino

In 2001, Nathalie and Dave Piraino decided it was time for a change, so they began to explore churches in and around Baltimore. They opened the doors to St. Matthew one Sunday morning in the middle of the 8:45 Mass. They saw Fr. Joe doing his thing, preaching the Gospel with his signature enthusiasm and gestures. Nathalie thought, "This is not a Catholic Church." So they looked around, saw that it was, and came back for the 11:00 Mass. Dave calls it an accident with purpose.

"I was part of another church during the horrible slaughter [Rwandan genocide] in 1994 and I begged for a prayer request and they refused," Nathalie remembers. Being from Rwanda, she lost her entire family in the genocide and in 2004, only three years after joining the St. Matthew community, the parish honored her family with a Memorial Mass on the 10th Anniversary of the genocide. "That's how you heal souls," she says.

Parishioners lit candles and when they burned all the way down, everyone processed to the Mary Garden where Fr. Joe mixed soil from Rwanda with the soil in the garden. Again on

April 7, 2019, 25 years later, St. Matthew honored those killed in the Genocide with a memorial at the Mary altar that stayed in place for 100 days. "For me it was Christ's light," says Nathalie.

On that day, "We could just feel the parishioners putting their arms around us. It was truly quite amazing! How the community came together so much that we could physically feel their support," Dave added.

As our parish grows, Dave shared that he feels the essence of St. Matthew's is to address the needs of the parishioner and the greater community by getting more involved in what is happening beyond our walls, especially the killings in the city and bringing awareness to them.



Thammy Etienne

"For five years I prayed to find a church home. In 2014, I had given up hope of such a thing happening. I was a foreigner in a foreign land just going through the motions until a few years ago.

"I walked into the church and sat in the back pew not thinking anything of it. But my God had something in store for me that day, proving He is still in the miracle-making business of answering prayers. This service was different. It was animated, full of laughter, love, and hugs. For the first time in a very long time I felt His presence again and had my breath taken away. I left the church that day intending to come back and explore just a little deeper. Unfortunately, I forgot the church's name, and I didn't know the area, so it took me a few months to find it again.



"St. Matthew rekindled my drive, nourished my soul, and allowed me to use my talents to serve others. After five years in the U.S., where everything and everyone who I encountered reminded me that I was an outsider, I had finally found a place that felt like home.

St. Matthew is one of the few places where I am able to be my authentic Haitian self without fear of judgment. That is by far, the greatest and most precious gift I could have ever asked and received.

"Merci St. Mathieu pour ta tendresse et ton amour. Merci de m'avoir adopté comme l'un des tiens."

(Thammy is attending medical school in Pennsylvania and shared these words before leaving)

Peter Wanjihia Njaû Family



Peter and Eva Njaû were among the first families of the now robust Kenyan community to arrive at St. Matthew. Says Peter, "I visited several parishes with a hope of finding one that I could call home. When I visited St. Matthew, I knew I had found such a place." He recalls that it wasn't a bed of roses at first for new arrivals, as there were some parishioners who were not quite as open to the idea of new cultures and worship styles.

Peter and Eva were married here 21 years ago. Eva values when Fr. Joe calls the whole church to pray for parishioners who are travelling, celebrating a birthday, anniversary, going for surgery, or relocating. "It is amazing to see everyone, including people you

don't even know, stretch out their hands and gather around to pray in unison," she says.

As with many in the Kenyan community it's a family affair. Eva is chairlady of the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), Baltimore Chapter, Peter was the Wasafiri chairman for 20 years, and daughters Malaika and Naima have participated in youth mission trips and IOSC youth events.

Malaika's earliest memory of St. Matthew is the processions with the Wasafiri Voices. She recalls, "I was the youngest member and usually the person who carried the Bible up to the priest while we sang and danced to the rhythms of the drum beating to Kikuyu and Swahili songs."

She reflects, "There aren't many places where so many people from different places gather together in Baltimore, it creates a synergy of sorts and makes you feel like you're a part of something bigger than you."

Malaika's message to her sister and the next generation, "Keep spreading love, peace, and positivity. Work together and don't work against one another. Shift your perspective and listen to one another."



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|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| American Samoa | India | Puerto Rico |
| Antigua | Ireland | Romania |
| Aruba | Italy | Rwanda |
| Cameroon | Ivory Coast | Senegal |
| Chili | Jamaica | Sierra Leone |
| Columbia | Japan | St. Lucia |
| Cuba | Jordan | Sudan |
| Ecuador | Kenya | Swaziland |
| England | Liberia | Switzerland |
| Equatorial Guinea | Mexico | Tanzania |
| Eritrea | Montserrat | Togo |
| Ethiopia | Nepal | Trinidad & Tobago |
| France | Nigeria | USA |
| Germany | Panama | Zaire |
| Ghana | Peru | Zambia |
| Grenada | Philippines | |
| Haiti | Portugal | |

The Woman with the Blue Head Tie

Ndi banyi, Chineke mu bu Eze!
 (Our people, My God is King)
 My path is not of my own,
 He walks by my side, I am never alone

Brown skin, glowing in the sun
 Enter the room, open to everyone

Colorfully painted flags in my path
 1 flag, 2 flags, 3 flags, 4
 Waving ever so boldly
 All are welcome to the door

Standing out with her blue head tie
 Eating from the same plate
 Drinking from the same cup
 His bread is my bread
 His blood is my blood

We are many, extension of hands
 Brothers and sisters
 Crossing paths from different lands

We seek the same God
 Cut from different cloths

My path is not of my own
 He walks with us, we are never alone
 She stands proud with her blue head tie
 We are all His people,
 Extension of hearts
 Extension of hands
 Brothers and sisters, different paths,
 different lands
 Ndi banyi, Chineke anyi bu Eze!
 (Our people, Our God is King!)

Ijeoma Ekeocha

Ilona Diaz & Rhody Tumanon

Ilona Diaz and Rhody Tumanon began attending St. Matthew Parish in the early 1970s, when mass attendance was large. They both agreed that it was difficult to be known or get involved. "It's not like now, when Fr. Joe says: Turn and say hello to your neighbor," quips Ilona.

For both women, the Renew effort in the 1980s, when small groups met in parishioners' homes, helped them get to know others and encouraged Rhody to become active in the Parish Council. Ilona started making casseroles for Our Daily Bread.

Rhody believes that the St. Matthew's community embodies the universal Catholic Church. "Having members from 47 different countries gives us so many opportunities to learn about other cultures and enriches the lives of St. Matthew's parishioners," she says.

They recall the memorial mass for the members of Nathalie Piraino's family, who perished in the Rwandan genocide. Rhody says, "Nathalie read the names of her family members, how they died, Fr. Joe mixed together

Rwandan soil with soil from St. Matthew, the parishioners in attendance prayed for the family, then the mixed soil was spread in the Blessed Mother Prayer Garden. I've never experienced such an outpouring of emotions, prayer and culture sharing." More recently with ecumenical openness, St. Matthew's has welcomed a relationship with the local Muslim community.

Ilona performs her community service as a Eucharistic Minister by bringing Holy Communion to homebound parishioners. Both women are proud of how visiting priests recognize our parish's exceptional hospitality and how we listen and respond to their message.

Rhody is hoping that someone, especially the youth will remember to unearth the Time Capsule on our 100th year, "We buried it in the Blessed Mother Prayer Garden when we celebrated our 50th Anniversary." It contains photographs of parishioners, their families, and ministries the way we were. Ilona, hopes that St. Matthews parish of the future will be "every bit as welcoming as we are in our 70th year."

Kathy Sprague

Kathy Sprague has not been at St. Matthew for long. When her daughter told her family she was gay, Kathy found that the parish she was attending was increasingly unsupportive, even negative. When one of the deacons spoke out against marriage equality, Kathy knew she had to leave. "My conscience led me to seek God, not doctrine."

So for a while she stopped going to church altogether, tried the Episcopalian church, and still was not satisfied. Searching online led to the New Ways Ministry site, which offers a list of LGBTQ-friendly Catholic parishes. "I researched different church websites and was struck by the LEAD site affiliated with St. Matthew." So one Sunday she and her family made the 45-minute drive to attend Mass and the monthly LEAD meeting. She kept coming and now attends Mass regularly at St. Matthew.

"Finding this parish and LEAD has restored my faith." She especially loves the diversity, inclusive language, and warm welcome of St.

Dick Ullrich



In 2010, Dick Ullrich saw a need at St. Matthew for LGBTQ support and that he wanted to be a part of that. His life in the parish developed from there.

New Ways Ministry, one of the earliest Catholic supports for LGBTQ Catholics, held a summertime picnic, where many people spoke about marriage. One person from St. Matthew asked how can we support and help our children? Her question was met with silence. Dick then asked the group, "Could we meet to try to find an answer to her question of how we could help our LGBTQ children?" The response was an overwhelming yes, so they did, every month for a year.

At every meeting, new people appeared to add support. The group decided on a name, LEAD: L=lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer; E=educating; A=affirming; D=diversity. Thus LEAD was born.

Matthew parishioners. She believes that this parish opens people up to new experiences that they would not otherwise have.



It is the large number of activities and the opportunity to be of service that Kathy especially values at St. Matthew. The preachings of Fr. Joe and Fr. Mike are inspiring and draw us all together. Kathy says that she gets so much more here than from any other church because, "St. Matthew parish eliminates the complacency that can become part of Catholic life. There is a greater love at St. Matthew."

This year, Kathy agreed to serve as one of the leaders of the LEAD Ministry. Even as a relative newcomer, her sense of belonging at St. Matthew is strong and steady.

Through prayer and discernment, LEAD formulated a mission and vision statement. Dick was the original leader of LEAD. Under his guidance, LEAD produced videos of their stories and the work was a finalist for the Baltimore Museum of Art's Sondheim Prize in 2016. In addition, Archbishop Lori and Bishop Madden have attended LEAD meetings.

Although Dick was one of the first leaders of LEAD, many other people have contributed to its lasting success. "Foremost is Fr. Joe, who has given advice and support over the years and has allowed LEAD to develop freely, never trying to direct the group," he states. Others there from the beginning include Pat Jones, Carolyn Scheide, and Ryan and Joan Sattler.

To that question asked so many years ago, "What can we do to begin to help our suffering children, our loved ones, ourselves?" Dick replies, "LEAD is the answer."

BUILD Moments

In 1977, our pastor, Msgr. Clare O'Dwyer, was one of several clergy who invited the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) to help them create a broad-based organization of Baltimore churches to unite the city around social justice and human development. St. Matthew parish has been an active participant in BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development) for most of its 42-year history. Rather than try to recap the history of St. Matthew in BUILD, a few reflections to highlight that relationship...

"I remember going to the very first meeting of BUILD with [Msgr] O'Dwyer at Eastern High School. Not everybody in St. Matthews went for it, but I did not quit."

Jane Vaeth

"BUILD helped me grow and gave me courage to follow the path God was leading me. Over the years, BUILD continues to help bring people together to work for the common good and nurture them to make a difference in their world."

Sue Rovnak

"The BUILD Actions...show that it takes stamina and guts and compromise to get things done in a city like Baltimore."

Aaron DeGraffenreidt

"The visit of the Kirwan Commission brought home to me the value of BUILD. As a city resident and school parent, it was the biggest learning – what we can achieve for these children who are our future."

Rosemary Mukira

"Recently, with the threat of ICE raids, we joined other BUILD churches for the Stations of the Cross at Sacred Heart Church (Highlandtown) to stand in solidarity with that community. That was powerful."

Elaine Crawford



"St. Matthew got it going, then BUILD expanded on the vigils for McKenzie Elliott, inviting other parishes, community leaders and officials. As a community, St. Matthew has always understood that faith and social justice go hand-in-hand. BUILD helps us to act on that essential part of our faith."

JoAnne Stanton

Muslim Women

Women from St. Matthew and other Christian churches meet regularly with a group of women from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, forging friendships and a deeper understanding of each other and our faiths. We asked our new friends how these gatherings may have changed their thoughts about Catholics and Christians. A few of their reflections:

"...a wonderful experience. I have been sharing the teachings from Quran and message of Islam during our monthly meetings, [and] found them very respectful, tolerating and understanding of our faith and beliefs. They come with an open mind and open arms ready to embrace the message of love for all, hatred for none."

"Our encounters have increased my respect for Christian Catholics. My perception was that most people in America are not interested in faith or talking about faith, but this wonderful group of ladies has shown otherwise. I get to learn about their faith."

Comboni Missionary Sisters

The Comboni Missionary Sisters first came to St. Matthew in 2001. Since then we have had 30 sisters in residence. Currently Sisters Andre Rothschild, Bernadette Hilmer, Ilaria Buonriposi, and Mercedes Castillo Razo reside here, each having a different role in the Baltimore community working together as an important component of the St. Matthew community.

When Sr. Andre, the community coordinator, came here in 2006, she was "attracted to St. Matthew because it was a diverse parish, with multiple ethnicities and many sub-groups all working together within one Catholic community."

The sisters frequently respond to the needs expressed by the St. Matthew community including supporting efforts of Catholic Relief Services, and local campaigns for violence prevention and for improved support of immigrants. They follow St. Daniel Comboni's example by accepting the mission of promoting unity in the face of ethnic and social diversity.

Their involvement in the ministries of St. Matthew is extensive, including participation in the Liturgy Committee and Prison Ministry,

leading RCIA, organizing actions to bring awareness to the most vulnerable and they visit home-bound parishioners and those in the hospital and nursing homes.



"The community I've met in St. Matthew has a relevant place: multicultural striving to be intercultural, welcoming all paths of life and faith without judgment; concerned and caring for those who suffer near and far; and proactive in advocating for those whose dignity is somehow violated and living the talk," shares Sr. Ilaria

Financial Peace University

"Jermaine and I wanted to bring Financial Peace University, FPU, to our church community to pay it forward. As we go through the steps to financial peace, we want others to experience the same freedom we have. Also, we want people to be able to give more through tithing to our church. The only way they can give more is to manage their household finances God's way. This program teaches God's way of handling money."

Keyah and Jermaine Spann, FPU leaders

(Every Valentine's Day, the Spann family gives all women in the church a flower.)



Benedictine Sisters

"The Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict came to Baltimore in 1971 and lived at Spalding Convent in Glen Burnie. Fr. Joe was a deacon there and an instant connection was made, especially our relationship in ministry and response to the call of Vatican II to reform and 'open the windows' of our church...and our world.

"Since our move to Lutherville in 1986, many of us worship at St. Matthew - an inclusive, wonderful vibrant church, with a pastor who challenges the congregation to really allow Scripture to transform us.

"The community of St. Matthew has been a welcoming place to the Benedictines where we have celebrated jubilees, funerals and other



occasions. Some of our families, after having the experience of the St. Matthew community wish that they belonged to such an inclusive and international community and we agree!"

Sr. Patricia Kirk, Prioress

Aaron DeGraffenreidt

Aaron DeGraffenreidt's earliest memory of St. Matthew is of his first communion day. It was 1991 and Mass was in the lower church. He remembers "a lot of running around with other kids" and that his cousin made his first communion that same day. It was much later in life that he came to appreciate the unique character of St. Matthew's parish, when he realized that the multi-cultural experience he knew here was not the norm for Catholic parishes, and his experience that our parish "lives the values we espouse."

He recalls situations at Bucknell University where individuals used disrespectful or derogatory language or expressed views that just felt wrong. "I was in college and just working out how things fit together. This church helped me realize that even when it's not easy, we have to walk these ideals that we teach." He decided to enter the Peace Corps, "...not just because it was the smart thing to do, but the right thing." He believes that our diverse, international community helped spark that interest.

Aaron came back to Baltimore for law school and is now a land use attorney with the City of Baltimore, and an active parishioner at St. Matthew. When asked what experiences seemed to capture the heart of St. Matthew's mission and values, Aaron cites the church's

involvement in BUILD. While many faith groups avoid contentious issues, he sees this longstanding effort, and Fr. Joe's leadership in it, as "...more substantial... part of an effort to address particularly difficult problems that are specific to Baltimore."

Aaron and his wife Brenda are bringing their children up here, and he links his involvement with the Children's Liturgy of the Word to the broad range of adult role models he had growing up here. Aaron hopes St. Matthew always takes seriously the hymn, *We Are Many Parts, We Are All One Body*.

"Every person has a role to play here and a place in our church. It is up to us as parishioners to maintain that welcoming attitude."



The Surcel-Debes Family

"We found St. Matthew because we asked our neighbor if he knew of a "non-Catholic catholic church." Without a moment's hesitation, he made a call and we heard him say "Joe! I'm sending some folks your way." It was that simple - we were just that lucky.

"Our goal was to find a spiritual home to raise our kids, Norah and Katrina - a place where they were valued. At St. Matthew, our kids feel safe, listened to, and empowered. They feel like they can make a difference because St. Matthew gives them a platform to raise their voices. When Katrina petitioned her school in third grade to start an all-girls soccer team, she shared her story at Mass and connected with kids and adults who encouraged her to stand for what she believed in - the soccer team was formed the next fall. When Norah encouraged her school to ban plastic straws to save the oceans in the second grade, it was Fr. Joe who asked her to speak to the congregation about

her efforts. These may seem like little things, but actually they are the water and sunshine helping our kids grow. Because of the connections built here, they are learning that their lives are worth living to the fullest and that their church family will back them in their efforts to leave the world better than they found it.

"This church has brought the Bible and the daily news together and teaches our kids that God exists, not in the hierarchy, but in the relationships between us. Turns out, in looking for a "non-Catholic catholic church," we found one of the most Catholic ones - St. Matt's is truly a place where all are welcome."

Alexandra Surcel & John Debes



Jahid Carr

"My mom started attending St. Matthew before I was born. I was baptized there. We would visit other churches when I was a toddler and we didn't live in the neighborhood. We started coming regularly when I was 4 years old and we moved back. We found out I was on the autism spectrum around that same time. I am 19 now and going to Morgan State University. I still plan to come to church whenever I can.



Mr. Percy Myers. I liked camping and teaching the younger kids what to do.

"I joined scouts when I was 8 years old. Mr. Tracy Smith was my first scout leader. Then my mom started helping with the Cub Scout Pack 648. When I was old enough to join Boy Scouts, the closest Troop was 161 at the Church of the Messiah with

"For my Eagle Scout project, I was thinking of ideas of things that would be simple for me to do. I decided to set up a canned food drive and met with Ms. Roberta at Blessed Sacrament to see if I could work with them. It was a nice, helpful experience. People from St. Matthew and Blessed Sacrament helped me collect money and food. My parents and other scouts helped me assemble the food bags.

"Hugging during the sign of the peace makes me feel like a part of the church community. I like that Fr. Joe knows who I am. He is like a symbol of God to me in how he treats people."

Jahid Carr

The Labyrinth

Jackie Serfling wanted to offer the St. Matthew community a place where people could come to seek comfort and prayer. “When Rosie (Douglas) and Grace (Byerly) set up a canvas labyrinth downstairs during Lent, it was so powerful seeing 20 or 30 people walking in quiet meditation.” She sought out Bob DeLisle, then finance chair.

Bob consulted his family, knowing Jackie hoped to involve the whole community. Ben, Bob’s son, stepped up to take it on as an Eagle Scout project.

“Ben worked with Fr. Joe and me to identify an area behind the convent that would be ideal,” Jackie says. The Labyrinth Company offered a template that Ben might use as a guide. Jackie made a generous personal contribution and parishioners could, and still can, donate and have a brick, engraved with the name of a loved one or to honor their family, placed in the labyrinth.

By the fall of 2003, Ben was ready to organize a group from his scout troop to help build the foundation, cut bricks into the appropriate sizes, and lay the bricks according to the template. Most of the work was done over a four-day period. Cardinal Keeler, also an Eagle Scout, blessed the labyrinth at the same time he blessed the church addition (renovations) in the fall of 2005.



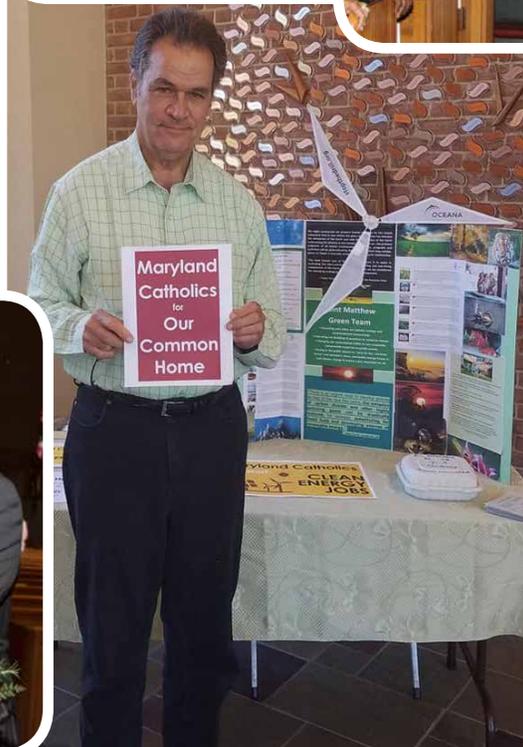
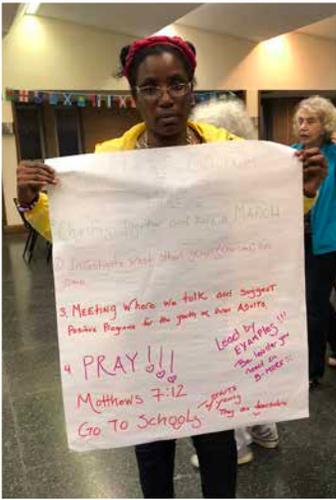
Jackie added flowers and other plants, and benches so those who visited could sit and reflect on their experience. St. Matthew community members continue to lovingly maintain the landscape.

Barbara Metz and Jackie added a Peace Pole in 2017.

Jackie knew that her dream was fulfilled in early August 2019 when the entire Kenyan community gathered to lay a brick in honor of Jane Kimuya who died here in 2018, and whose family had traveled from Kenya to attend. “The Wasafiri Voices sang and the entire labyrinth was surrounded with people and song!”

“We invite each of you to become a closer member of the family of St. Matthew. How do you do that? Get involved. Find some way to share your gifts and talents with this family and you will feel more and more what we have felt over the past 52 years of membership here.”

– Linda and Jack Murphy



Perry Family

Dallas and Kim Perry were married in 2011 at St. Matthew. They now have two children—Dallas, 5, and Chelsea, 1.

“Kim and I discovered St. Matthew through my grandmother, Laurentia Strawder, a long-time parishioner at St. Francis Xavier,” Dallas explains. He said that she had been to the church before and thought that it was a great fit for them. It was!

As soon as they attended mass at the church and felt the energy from the parish members, Fr. Joe and Deacon Rubio, “we knew this would be somewhere we could call home.” Through the years, they were confirmed, married, and had their children baptized at St. Matthew. Kim was a Gospel choir member, she loves to sing, and Dallas served on the Pastoral Council for three years and also supported some of the BUILD initiatives.

They both agree that St. Matthew is a strong community and should serve as a template for the modern Catholic Church. The active ministries serve a diverse community, many that

are constantly under attack, and “our church makes these communities a priority.”

“Life has gotten hectic and we wish we could do more around the church. We look forward to doing more as our children get older,” Kim shared.



Rev. Michael Schlepner



“My return to the parish of my youth was first of all to give Fr. Joe some support. Second, I was curious about the many good things I was hearing about St. Matthew’s people. I heard about the diversity, openness, new and different ways of thinking about what it meant to be a faith family where people really care about one another. The liturgies are prayerful, alive, and invigorating. Also there is much lay involvement and social justice awareness apparent. Every time I celebrate with you, I come away feeling nourished and am given much more than I’ve given.”

Patrons

PLATINUM

Carol Augustine
Family of Hilda and Al Augustine
Benedictine Sisters of
Emmanuel Monastery
Bonnie Bethea
The Buckley Family
Betty and Glen Charles
In Memory of Henry G.
and Grace A. Connelly
Emerson and Lynn Dorsey
and Family
Yae O. Dupont
Chidi Ekeocha
Drs. Bert and Patience Ekeocha
Family of Mychelle Farmer
and James DeGraffenreidt
In Memory of James and
Gladys DeGraffenreidt
Carole Fitzpatrick
The Gorman Family
Mr. Richard Howard Sr.
and Shirley Howard
Jill Huppert and Brian Volck
The Iduh Family
Immigration Outreach
Service Center
Pat Shannon Jones
Leslie and Leonore Knight
Junior and Ann Lynch and Family
Pete and Debbie McIver
Fr. Joseph L. Muth Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Wanjihia Njaũ
and Family
Kathleen O'Toole and
John Ruthrauff
Kathie and Ed Patey
Nathalie and David Piraino
The Queen Family
Kelley Ray
Susan Rovnak
St. Matthew Contemporary Choir
St. Matthew Fundraising Committee
St. Matthew Gospel Choir
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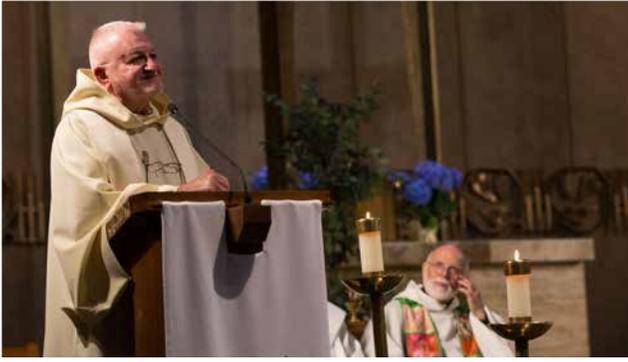
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More stories, expanded versions of those presented in this book and others, and a PDF of this book are available online at www.stmatthewbaltimore.org/70th-anniversary/stories

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