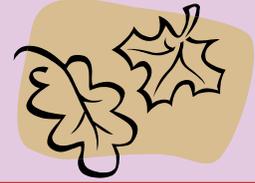




# ST. LEO THE GREAT PARISH FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER



## So Much to Be Grateful For...



With the ongoing COVID pandemic, increasing natural disasters, uneasy peace in so many countries, and deepening divisions in our own nation, many would say there's not much to be thankful for—and yet, as St. Leo's marks its 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary this November the opposite is true. We have been and continue to be abundantly blessed.

From the German immigrants who founded the parish in 1886, to the current diverse faith family of Anglo, African American, Latino, and African parishioners, belief and trust in God has resulted in blessing upon blessing.



From the very beginning, things at St. Leo often weren't what parishioners thought they wanted but they learned that God was working anyway—and powerfully so. While the first immigrant parishioners dreamed of having a beautiful church like the ones they attended back home in Germany, the only place they could originally find to worship was a room above a carpenter shop on what is now St. Leo Place. The first parish building was completed in 1888 with church on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and school rooms and pastors' quarters on the first. Parishioners continued to scrimp and save and labored to build the church, celebrating each step they made along the way. When the undercroft was completed in 1904, Mass was celebrated there while construction on the church continued. What joy there was when it was finally finished in 1911 and dedicated that November! Their dreams had materialized but not as quickly as they had hoped. Yet the journey, they learned, had been a blessing. They had grown in community as they held on to their dream and pooled their money together. Some who were masons had literally built parts of the church. Many helped in other ways. They discovered that God could be present in a dusty room above a carpenter's shop, in a multi-purpose building, and in an unfinished church basement, as well as in the beautiful church they had always envisioned.



Along the way, they started a school that educated hundreds of students for more than 75 years until it closed in 1979 and St. Boniface became the school for the parish. Former students still often call and share memories of their time at St. Leo school and many continue to be strong supporters today. The faith and determination of their parents and grandparents live through them as a gift to the parish today.

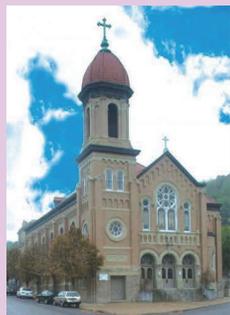
Today, a new generation of immigrants is rebuilding the parish. This time, it's not a physical structure but a family of faith grounded in praying the Eucharist and getting to know and love each other and celebrate their unique diversity. The task is no less daunting than building a church from the ground up but coming together in prayer each week, singing in multiple tongues, celebrating baptism, first communions, confirmations, marriages and grieving those who have died, has grown, as one parishioner said "into the privilege of being brothers and sisters in Jesus."



Though they may look and speak differently, there's a strong current of faith that unites the founders of 135 years ago with parishioners today. It's the conviction that God is present and leads the way and though the desired goal may not be achieved, what result is always better "than anything we could ask or imagine."



And so we give thanks—for the legacy of faith we share, for the daily surprises God puts in our lives, and for the unexpected and sometimes even undesired gifts God gives that enrich our lives and give us cause for much rejoicing. ~ Angela Anno



# CELEBRATING 135 YEARS!

