Catholic School Teachers Share Stories from the ‘60s

As we prepare for Reunion Sunday, we wanted to hear from some of the teachers about what it was like to be at St. Michael’s, St. Matthew’s, St. John Vianney’s and Our Lady of Guadalupe schools 50 years ago. In addition to conversations with Sr. St. Luke Copeland (pictured above, 1st row, far left) and Sr. Anne Becker (pages 10-11) we heard from Sr. Mary Edwin Lanners (page 5) and Sr. Andrea Zelenak (page 8). We also share a letter written in 1986 by four lay teachers who retired from St. Matt’s in 1976 (page 3).

Sr. St. Luke Copeland, CSJ at St. Michael’s School 1964-1989

When Sr. St. Luke joined St. Michael’s teaching staff in 1964, the parish was one of the oldest in the Archdiocese, but it felt like a much newer community. It was just eight years after the parish had moved from the lower West Side flats up the bluff and built a brand new campus, including a school and convent.

“It was a young parish at the time,” recalled Sr. St. Luke. “They were awfully nice kids and the parents were around my age, so we got along well. We were on the same wavelength.” Just a year after coming to St. Michael’s, Sr. St. Luke was named principal, a position she held for 24 years until retiring in 1989.

Sr. St. Luke remembers the early years at St. Mike’s were a time when big families were the norm. Of the 420 students enrolled at the school, 68 of them lived on the block across the street from St. Mike’s. “There were families with 10, 11, 12 kids — one family I know had 13 children,” Sr. St. Luke marveled.

Sr. Anne Becker Recalls the 1960’s

Continued on page 9
Dear Alums, Families and Friends of Community of Saints:

This newsletter has served Community of Saints (COS) well. We are able to showcase our students and faculty regularly; we are able to provide a place for members of our community, past and present, to tell their stories and their remembrances of Catholic education.

This issue allows us to feature a few of the teachers Alums may remember as we prepare for Reunion Sunday, April 30th at the chapel of Community of Saints. Mass is at 11:00 a.m. with refreshments to follow.

Reunion Sunday provides an opportunity for classmates to reconnect after not seeing each other for some years. If you are an alum of St. Matthew, St. Michael, Our Lady of Guadalupe or St. John Vianney why not call a handful of your classmates and invite them to join you for Reunion Sunday? Further details can be found on page 4 of this issue.

Since I have been retired from parish ministry I have offered Mass regularly at a number of parishes and institutions in the St. Paul area — Monday and Tuesday mornings at the Assumption, Monday and Friday mornings at Carondelet Village, Sunday and Tuesday at the Marian Center on the East Side, and Saturday at Cerenity on Humboldt.

I spread the word by bringing copies of the newsletter with me when I celebrate Mass. Members of these congregations are interested in the work of COS. I tell them about COS and encourage their prayers and support for the students and families and staff of COS.

I never tire of singing the praises of our wonderful students, committed families and dedicated teachers and staff. I invite them to join you as prayer warriors and financial supporters of the mission. They are honored to be invited.

Thank you for your continued support of your students at COS, and they are “your students” because without you they would not have the opportunity of a Catholic education.

With gratitude, I am,

Father Stephen Adrian
Canonical Administrator of Community of Saints

As Enrollment Rises, So Does Your Support!

65% Increase in Giving Through February

As of February 28, A&F&F has raised over $73,000 from 201 donations. That represents an increase of over 80% from last year at this time.

Your increased support is crucial as the number of students at Community of Saints grows. Enrollment this year is 10% greater than last year and that number is climbing.

Our commitment is that every family who wants a Catholic education for their child at Community of Saints will receive it. Thank you for making that possible.

Does Your Company Match Gifts?

If they do, your gift can be doubled. To find out go to: communityofsaints.org/supportourschool.
Submitted in 1986 by:

Lillian Baetz 1959-1976
Bea Fox 1967-1976
Agnes Mooney 1962-1976
Rose Korlath 1967-1976

A Letter from St. Matt’s Retired Teachers of ‘76

The early 60’s was just beginning to see a time of change in the Church. There was still daily Mass for students; Baltimore Catechism was memorized; students formed lines for confession and any other worthy reason! Confirmation was usually received about 4th grade and Holy Eucharist was received in large group in the 2nd grade. As teachers, we were privileged to receive a better knowledge of our Christian faith by being part of the change with our students.

Over 1,000 students graced the playground daily at St. Matt’s...teachers took turns supervising two lunch periods and playground. Lunch was eaten in silence in the classrooms before the existing cafeteria was built. School started with 8:00 am Mass and went until 3:00 pm. Classrooms were self-contained. Picture: three rooms of 48 students each in 4th grade; three rooms for 5th grade with 45 students each; three rooms for 7th grade with 45 students each; 2nd grade fared a little better with two classrooms of 33 students each. Each of these rooms had one teacher for the whole day with no aides. It was a long day!

We’re happy to see good physical changes in the school building. We assume no one in Room 206 has to place snow on the thermostat to enable the room below to have heat; we hope there is no longer ice on the windowsills in cold weather. However, do students still practice calisthenics swatting wasps or hornets in any of the classrooms?

Our cumulative span of 48 years of teaching at St. Matt’s brought many humorous events.

Remember the 6th grade trip to Duluth and one student, on bets and dares, jumped into Lake Superior?
Then there was the time the 7th grade was at Mass prior to boarding a bus for a field trip to the IDS Tower and Father Pacholl chose this time to tell the teachers that the elevators broke.

How about the upper grade teacher who struggled to learn the Latin Requiem Mass and guess what? The church changed to English.

Does anyone remember Heidi (Fr. Pacholl’s dog) appearing in the 2nd grade classroom, complete with ribbon around her neck, walking around helping to supervise?

At the end of the 1976 school year, we four “soon to be retirees from St. Matt’s” found ourselves having to convince kids that change would be healthy; education would go on in the fall, even though we wouldn’t be there. But time marches on when we see students we taught are now parents of youngsters at St. Matthew school! It’s a nice thing to see. Happy 100 Years St. Matthew’s!

Lillian Baetz  Bea Fox  Agnes Mooney  Rose Korlath
St. Michael’s Class of 1966

Last year, we said we were looking for a photo for St. Mike’s 8th grade class of 1966. Marilyn (Jones) Bach ’66 found one and also gave us the names. Now, 51 years after graduating, we’d like to recognize these alums.

Row 1 | Marilyn Jones, Chris Snyder, Roxanne Weldon, Susan King, Jean Emerson, Suzanne Branstrup, Gail Detamaso, Margaret Nickoley, Sharon Foster, Bobbi Jean Nitti, Maureen Weldon, Dorothy Dunn


Row 3 | Sally Dannecker, Julie Popek, Beverly Morgenstern, Cecilia Dosh Bluhm, Joan Finnel, Linda Roske, Cindy Demulling, Barb Finlayson, Ann Kapinski, Barb Schlader, Linda Weegman, Karen Einhorn, Laura Lu Wildenhauer, Mary Jo Hughes

Row 4 (Top) | Jim Petrozuski, Dennis Rowe, Mark Olchefske, Dave Dinger, Jim Wheeler, Dan Osendorf, Dave Gauthier, Dave Gadow, Garry Cummingham, Jim McCarthy, Dan Wilm, Tom O’Donald, Peter Riehm, Tim Bonnivell

Please Join Us for Reunion Sunday on April 30
Connect with Old Friends and Share Good Memories

Everyone is invited to an All School Reunion, including alums from the schools at St. Matthew’s, St. Michael’s, St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

When: 11:00 a.m. Mass with Fr. Steve Adrian presiding

Where: Community of Saints Chapel, 335 Hurley St. East, West St. Paul (former St. Michael’s Church)

RSVP: To join us for a light breakfast, call Doug Lieser at 651-457-2510 x119 or email alums@communityofsaints.org.

Special recognition this year goes to classes that graduated in years ending in a “2” or “7.” On pages 4-8 we’ve included photos of classes celebrating their 50th anniversary.
Sr. Mary Edwin Lanners at Our Lady of Guadalupe School

Sr. Mary Edwin Lanners, SSND was among the first teachers at Guadalupe School when it opened its doors in 1961. (Sr. Giovanni joined the staff three years later.) Sister loved the children. They were eager to learn, curious, and loving. Parents were very involved in school and extra-curricular activities, including dancing classes. Sister remembers children taking their love of dancing and singing to the Convention Center, to Cinco de Mayo parades, to the Rosary Society meetings and on hospital visits. Sister watched how all these activities changed the children’s lives — they felt loved and loving, cared for and caring. Sister’s family invited students to spend weeks during the summer on the Lanner’s farm in St. Leo, MN. In 1970, Sister was reassigned. Simultaneously Guadalupe School closed to become part of Project Discovery with Cathedral, St. Peter Claver, and St. Stan’s Schools.

Sr. Mary Edwin now lives in retirement at the SSND campus in Mankato.

Sr. Mary Edwin’s memories were shared with Sr. Anne Becker.
Row 1 | Virginia Berg, Mary Lou Plantenberg, Patricia Kelly, Rosemarie Plante, Sheila Shaughnessy, Lynne Miller, Msgr. James Cecka, Deborah Dalton, Mary Pavlak, Barbara Burdash, Sandra Mathis, Paula Haas, Jo Ann Stodola

Row 2 | Thomas Frank, Chris Hinding, James Miller, Thomas Heininger, Gerald Sussner, Thomas Paquette, Paul Patient, Thomas Tabor, Michael Griffin, Steven Willems, Robert Bejblik, Robert Verstraete, Ronald Rover, David Bukowski, Terrence O’Brien

Row 3 | Patricia Schadegg, Denise David, Carmen Hunter, Judith Kosel, Carol Zimmerman, Claire St. Sauver, Phyllis Vesey, Marilyn Bobick, Roseanne Schueller, Ruthanne Schueller, Mary Jo Duffy, Judith Mitchell, Mary Rose Beaudette, Kathleen Preuss, Denise Heininger, Janice Cooper
Class of 1967


Row 5  |  Jay Sperl, Anna Aguirre, Colleen Scherado, Jeanne Becker, Roxanne Kaufhold, Sandra Lorch, Diane Schowalter, Cynthia Lorch, Karen Faehnrich, Janice Zasada, Constance Wenzel, Nancy Brunzel, Lucy Francis, Sandra Martin, Timothy Schieber

Row 6  |  David Miller, Paul Ward, David Nehring, Steven Hayes, Raymond Mosberger, Michael Bauer, Alvin Bachel, Philip Stehr, Chris Stevens, Steven Hammer, Jeffrey Thul, Charles Ketchmark, Gregory Leyde, Charles Kaiser, Steven Ohmann, Daniel Stoven, Warren Anderson
St. John Vianney’s Class of 1967

Row 1 | Michael Caliguire, Mark Kaliszewski, Bruce Peterson, John Broom, Greg Stewart, Max Alberts, Michael Powers, Mark Lawrence

Row 2 | Kathleen Murphy, Roxanne Warzecha, Margaret Mikatowski [deceased], Theresa Buhl, Nancy Tobritzhofer, Sister Cyril, Diane Dorma, Susan Kocher, Kristine Tambornino, Bonita Wilm, Sharon Rademacher

Row 3 | Carol Stewart, Jean Entgelmeier, Vicki Mikacevich, Jean Caseltine, Colleen Wituski, Annette Kusmirtz, Eileen White, Kathy Wacker, Debbie Lorence, Cynthia Smith, Mary Lou Klinkhammer

Row 4 | Lawrence Thomas, Douglas Trebatske, William Schwamberger, John Yackley, Douglas Miller, Stephen Lorence, Steven Milner. Not pictured: Joe Demars, Patricia Muntean

Sr. Andrea Zelenak at Providence School

When Sr. Andrea Zelenak, SSND was assigned to South St. Paul’s Catholic school, she soon learned that she would be principal of Providence School — later called St. John Vianney School. Right from the beginning of her 19 years there, Sister says she loved working with parents and staff, planning new programs that would spike both learning and fun. High on this list were creating a new media center and beginning a Montessori School for preschoolers three, four and five year olds.

When the public school in South St. Paul opened its doors for shared time with Providence School, junior high students spent afternoons there for classes in home economics, shop, physical ed and science. These were exciting and wonderfully challenging times, Sister remembers.

Sr. Andrea now lives in retirement in St. Paul.

Sr. Andrea Zelenak’s memories were shared with Sr. Anne Becker.
Working Hard While Having Fun

As principal, student achievement was a top priority for Sr. St. Luke. When standardized test scores for public schools were printed in the paper, she always made a point to do a little comparing. “The scores for many schools were in the 50th percentile, and they seemed okay with that,” she said with mild surprise. “I would not have been happy. Students in our schools were mostly in the 80th percentile and above.”

While she expected her students to work hard, she remembers there was always time for fun, like when Minnesota Twins player, Tony Oliva, visited the school. Sr. St. Luke, a big sports fan, said she didn’t get much warning that the baseball star would be coming by. “One of our students stopped by the convent and said, ‘Tony Oliva is coming to school tomorrow,’” Sr. St. Luke recalled. “It turns out he was a family friend.” Sr. St. Luke immediately went out and bought up every baseball she could find in West St. Paul. The next day, after Tony Oliva spoke to the school assembly, the students drew names to see who would receive one of the balls with the baseball legend’s autograph. Sr. St. Luke had purchased almost 200 baseballs and Tony Oliva signed them all. “Tony was friendly and also kind of shy,” Sr. St. Luke recalled with a smile. “He didn’t speak English really well, but that didn’t matter to the kids. They were so delighted to see him. I wished I’d had enough baseballs for everyone,” she added wistfully.

Strong Support for the School

Sr. St. Luke also remembers the community’s unflinching support for the school. “The parish paid about 68% of the school costs in those days. We had lower tuition than a lot of schools and the parishioners were willing to support that,” Sr. St. Luke explained. “If someone didn’t have money to pay, Fr. Dudley just told them to pay what they could. We took everybody in.” She remembers that Sr. Wilma kept track of the books and no one ever questioned whether a family actually needed help or not.

That commitment was mirrored among the teaching staff. “The nuns always got a really low salary,” she laughed, “But the lay teachers understood the situation and were willing to teach at a lower salary, too. If Fr. Dudley had the money, he’d give lay teachers a bonus at Christmas time. People taught there for a long time. They felt they were being treated fairly.”

While Sr. St. Luke served as principal for most of her time at St. Mike’s, she admits she preferred teaching. “Watching the children grow and gain knowledge and interest in everything around them,” she said, explaining what made teaching so much fun. “And I enjoyed seeing all their different personalities.”

She was also thankful for the talented teaching staff she worked with. “Sr. Blanche was there, Sr. Mary Boniva, Mrs. Brick, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Charley, Jill Peck, Lucy Jones and Mrs. Erickson,” she said, ticking off the names. “And I remember Mrs. Garon in 2nd grade. She would bring her students to Mass and they would all genuflect, picture perfect,” Sr. St. Luke observed.

These days, Sr. St. Luke lives at Carondolet Village in St. Paul and she still teaches. For many years she’s volunteered as an English as a Second Language tutor.

Sr. St. Luke often runs into former students from her years at St. Michael’s, and on occasion, she gets together with her fellow teachers. “We had a nice mix of people and when we get together, we can talk about those days forever,” she said. “We could write a book about some of the things our students said and did,” she paused. “But we won’t,” she added, laughing again.
Sr. Anne Becker joined St. Matthew’s teaching staff in 1969, at the end of a turbulent decade for the Catholic Church in general and St. Matthew’s in particular. The year before, St. Matthew’s church had burned to the ground and a new one was in the works. “It was a very difficult time,” Sr. Anne recalled. “The original baroque church, with every stone hallowed, was gone. And to replace it, we came up with this square. No stained glassed windows. No statues except for the ones outside. But we were learning about Vatican II, and the idea that the priest was one among us and that we were the people of God. It was an interesting time.”

Changing Habits Reflect Changing Times

Looking back, Sr. Anne remembers many cultural shifts but one stood out for her personally. During the 1960s, the habits worn by the School Sisters of Notre Dame underwent two seismic evolutions. The first came in 1965 when the SSND transitioned from the original habit to the modified one. They were still covered from head to toe but the attire was less restrictive. The impact went beyond cosmetic. The scaled down headdress meant SSND now had the peripheral vision necessary to drive a car.

Changes to the habit continued in 1969 when the SSND allowed members of the order the option of wearing professional dress with a veil. “Everybody knew that it was happening and that on this certain date, we would be wearing something different.” Sr. Anne explained. It meant a new wardrobe and a lot of sewing. “We either made our own clothes or had a seamstress make them.”

“We tried to prepare people,” Sr. Anne explained. “We told them, ‘After this date, we’ll look different. You’re going to see our legs and probably the color of our hair,’” she added, laughing. “I was happy about the change.”

As for the students, Sr. Anne said it was never a big deal. “The kids absorbed the changes so easily, it was never a problem for them,” she said. “They may have noticed when we played ball, we didn’t have to pull up our skirt.”

The habit was just one of many changes rippling through the parish. Sr. Anne recited a litany of them. “There was the changing Ecumenism — the idea that you didn’t have to be Catholic to go to heaven,” she said. “And changing to the vernacular, so you didn’t have to worship in Latin. And the priest turning to face the congregation.” She also recalled that there was greater freedom within religious life. “For the first time ever,” Sr. Anne said, “Sisters who never before had gone out at night, could join the lay staff for evening meetings.”
In 2011, shortly before Sr. Anne planned to celebrate her 60th anniversary as an SSND, she took a call from a man who’d phoned the parish office and asked to speak with a nun. “He was angry and upset and hurting,” Sr. Anne said. “He’d had a hard life and he was calling to complain about a nun who had hurt him when he was a child. I said to him ‘In the name of the sister, I apologize and I hope you can forgive her. We are human and we make mistakes.’ And after I spoke those words, I could hear his voice softening.”

Sr. Anne believes there are many people who feel they were treated unjustly or unkindly by some of the nuns who taught them. Looking back, she knows there are times she wishes she had treated a student differently, but she also knows what was like for the sisters. “We were often teaching very large classes and teaching the same thing to all the students — there was no differentiated learning,” she explained. “How could you satisfy the reading level of one student who needed help, with the same book as a child who was really advanced? You can’t. One child would get bored and act up. Speaking for the sisters, I can say that we were not patient enough or prepared enough. It was a human place.”

In Leviticus, Sr. Anne read that Jubilees were celebrated by forgiving all debts and starting fresh. That was her inspiration when she addressed the congregation for an annual appeal for the Religious Retirement fund. She told the congregation that she was celebrating her Jubilee and offered them the opportunity to celebrate with her. “It was at the end of Mass and I told the congregation, ‘To all of you who have been hurt by a teacher or a sister, I would like to apologize. And if you feel you’ve hurt a sister, I accept your apology.’ That was my way of celebrating.”

“I Believe in Community”

Sr. Anne taught music at St. Matthew’s School for seven years but she returned to the parish in 2005 and serves as pastoral minister, providing music at Masses, assisting with funerals, supporting faith formation, and occasionally leading religion classes for Community of Saint’s middle school students. In addition to her work at St. Matthew’s, Sr. Anne is also part of a ministry working with women in the Shakopee prison. She visits once a month and participates in bi-annual Cursillo retreats.

“I believe in community,” Sr. Anne said simply as she explained her wide-ranging ministries. “I come from a family of nine and I have 58 nieces and nephews and I know them all. I love family, community, giving and receiving. And that’s what St. Matthew’s has been for me. This is my community, my family.”
SPONSORSHIP opportunities

Businesses and organizations are invited to help sponsor The Good News and support Alums & Friends & Families’ efforts to raise funds for tuition assistance. Sponsorship helps us achieve our goal of making a high quality, Catholic education available to all families in our community, regardless of their ability to afford tuition.

If you’d like more information about sponsorship, please contact Doug Lieser at DLieser@communityofsaints.org or call 651-457-2510.

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