Carrying on a Basilica Tradition

Multi-generational families committed to service

“FOR everything there is a season,” wrote Qoheleth, whose teachings were recorded in Ecclesiastes long before The Byrds added a catchy refrain in the Sixties. A time to reap, to sow, to laugh, to cry, to dance, to heal, to embrace, and more. There is a time and place to everything under the heaven. Some Basilica families have spent many times and seasons at The Basilica, purposely weaving the parish into their lives multi-generationally.

The Streitz-Christensen family. (L to R) Michael Streitz, Ann Streitz Christensen, Bruce Christensen, Jane Christensen, Tom McCary, Ellen Christensen, and Charlie Christensen. (Right) Michael Streitz with granddaughter Daisy.
The CONROY Family
Jean (MacGibbon) Conroy grew up near The Basilica in the Kenwood neighborhood, and her mother, Lucinda (Hedding) MacGibbon, was a member of The Basilica. Jean received childhood sacraments at The Basilica, and recalls being anxious at her First Reconciliation and “a bit intimidated” by Monsignor Reardon. Jean and her sister Ann were married within two months of each other in The Basilica’s sacristy, each taking a turn wearing the same wedding gown. Jean’s husband was from Buffalo, New York, and he became an active member at The Basilica when they moved into Jean’s family home.

Through the years, Jean volunteered her time and was a weekly money counter until just a few years ago. Her son, Bill, is a lifelong Basilica member; here he received all his Sacraments, volunteered as an altar server, attended religious education classes, and served on an Ecumenical committee.

Margaret Harrington began attending The Basilica in 1993 and joined committees supporting the Undercroft development and the Families Moving Forward program. Bill and Margaret met at a Saturday evening Mass at The Basilica in 2001, when he struck up conversation with her about her broken ankle; they married one year later at The Basilica.

Their daughter Grace, age 15, was baptized and received her First Communion here, joined the Cherub Choir at age four, and continues to sing with the Juventus youth choir. As a child, Grace joined her mother, Margaret, and grandmother, Jean, to deliver Meals on Wheels monthly in addition to helping host Families Moving Forward.

Jean recently turned 96 years old; Bill, Margaret, and Grace bring her to Mass at The Basilica as the weather and her overall energy allows. Parish members always make a point to visit with her. Jean sees many strengths at The Basilica today, including a deeper sense of camaraderie among members, a greater commitment to community service, and a welcoming, positive atmosphere.

Continued
MULTI-GENERATIONAL participation at The Basilica doesn’t need to span a century. Other families, newer to our parish community, also find numerous ways to live their faith here as a family.

Volunteering as a family

The ODEN Family

Ross and Jane Oden joined The Basilica in 2008 and started volunteering as ushers and greeters in 2011, when their oldest son, Andrew, was a toddler. “Drew needed me to walk with him in church,” Jane says wryly, “so I figured we could be helpful too.” The whole family became familiar welcoming faces at the 11:30 AM Mass.

Now the Odens have four young children — “almost enough for a full hospitality team with our family!” she laughs. Ross and Jane wanted all their children to get involved early in their childhoods. “Given the opportunity, all my kids love to ‘help.’ It is important because it’s their church too.” Drew, now age seven, says he likes helping and cleaning; Leah, age five, says, “Going to church and helping makes me feel like Jesus is close.”

(L to R) Andrew, Emily, Matthew, and Leah Oden

Ross Oden passed away November 19, 2018. He was a beloved and devoted father, husband, son and parishioner. May he rest in peace and may his memory live on in the lives of his children.

The ARNASON Family

Jackie Peak and her father, Dave Arnason, are passionate volunteers with The Basilica’s Habitat for Humanity annual build week. Dave has been on The Basilica’s planning committee for three years and Jackie works at Habitat as the local Faith Relations senior associate.

They started volunteering at Habitat when Jackie was a student at Totino Grace High School. Dave was always handy and learned building skills from his father. After he and his wife Pam raised Jackie and her brother Alex in Blaine, they moved to downtown Minneapolis in 2012 and joined The Basilica.

Jackie moved back to Minneapolis after graduate school in 2014 and began attending The Basilica with her parents; she officially joined the parish in 2016 and attended marriage preparation and baptism preparation classes to be godparents. Their family has always been close — they laughingly describe themselves as the “Core Four”— so volunteering and worshipping together at The Basilica is a
Voices From a Landmark

In 1999 The Basilica of Saint Mary commissioned the writing and printing of Voices From a Landmark, featuring stories from Basilica members through the years. Here are some quotes shared with the book’s author.

Even the iron handrails on the exterior side entrances have a story — they were donated over 60 years ago by Annie C. Quinlan, who thought it would be safer to have railings. Miss Quinlan and her sister Elizabeth were great friends, and frequent dinner partners of pastor Monsignor James Reardon. Members of that family have been in the parish from 1867 until the present day.

— Peg Guilfoyle, author

There was a small grouping in our neighborhood of about fifteen Italian families. The Piazzas and Cutaras and Famalaros and Natolis and Battaglias and Mandiles and so forth. That’s how it was in those early days. If someone came over from the old country, they’d live with friends who help them along. And that whole neighborhood belonged to The Basilica.

— Gus Zuccaro

We actually walked the distance from the 2nd and Penn area, and it was a long walk in the winter. Because we came from the west, there were only two large visible structures. One was The Basilica itself and the other was the Foshay Tower. The Basilica still stands out, but, well, the Foshay is no longer a large building!

— Clarence Birk

It was a cold and windy day on November 16, 1946, when Henry and I were married at The Basilica of Saint Mary. We were given 8 AM by Monsignor Reardon. The fact that our families had to drive in from the country was irrelevant. Hank’s family got up before dawn, milked the cows, did the chores, and drove over 100 miles and were at The Basilica before 8 AM and there were no freeways! We have seven children and eight grandchildren — a three-generation family at The Basilica.

— Kathleen Baron (deceased)