

Voices from Our Community

Local civic and faith leaders share their thoughts on this historic anniversary



THE SESQUICENTENNIAL of The Basilica parish is a wonderful reminder of what can happen when we give God our “yes.” For 150 years, the Lord has been forming a community around a joyful celebration of the Eucharist and the proclamation of the Word, a community that, under the patronage of Mary, has taken to heart Jesus’ affirmation that whatever we do the least of his brothers and sisters we do unto him. I feel privileged to join you in giving thanks for the blessings of these past 150 years and I promise my prayers as you lovingly continue the important work that has been entrusted to you in this portion of the Lord’s vineyard. Congratulations!

— + BERNARD A. HEBDA
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

WHEN WE ASSEMBLE at First Unitarian Society, we look out over the city and see two magnificent buildings — the Walker Art Center and The Basilica. Cutting-edge art and the strength and compassion represented by The Basilica. What better testaments to the spirit of Minneapolis? Congratulations on a hundred and fifty years in the city. Here’s to many, many more.

— DR. DAVID BREEDEN
First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY and the Minneapolis Institute of Art have similar roles as emblems of our city’s storied history. Both were designed in the Beaux-Arts architectural style and both were constructed in the early 1900s, when the country was rapidly urbanizing and the Twin Cities were establishing themselves as a hub of commerce. The Basilica opened in 1914, Mia in 1915, and from the start they served as Minneapolis landmarks and centers of civic pride. Yet their roles continue to evolve along with the city itself, an ongoing legacy of making an impact on the community.

— KAYWIN FELDMAN
Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia)

WORLD FAMOUS urbanist Jane Jacobs once wrote: “Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created for everybody.” Public, private, and non-profit leaders alongside diverse faith communities applaud and extend gratitude for how The Basilica has been resilient in every congregational life cycle, and through it all, been both a model of Christian community and a catalyst to spur Minneapolis toward being a city that is created for everyone.

— REV. DR. DAN COLLISON
First Covenant Church

FOR 150 YEARS, The Basilica of Saint Mary has been a pillar of the Minneapolis community and has provided many Minnesotans a place to worship, explore their faith, and contribute to their community. I thank The Basilica's ministry for their exemplary social outreach, stewardship, and service. Congratulations on 150 years of ministry! I pray that The Basilica's future is filled with hope, peace, and prosperity for all its parishioners and neighbors.

— MARK DAYTON
Governor of Minnesota

GROWING UP IN ST. PAUL, whenever my family and I headed west on I-94 we would pass this awesome looking structure near downtown Minneapolis. That striking edifice was, of course, The Basilica of Saint Mary. Then I visited and went inside and saw the beauty within, a sacred space suited to worshipping the Lord and glorifying His holy name. For 150 years the parish has served its own faithful and ministered to countless others around The Basilica. It stands as a testimony to the beauty of God Himself and His love for all mankind. We congratulate you for 150 years of service to the people of Minneapolis.

— FR. GEORGE DOKOS
St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church

FOR SO MANY YEARS among the Muslim community and The Basilica, within Downtown Clergy Council, we have been participating in cooperative, constructive, and positive interactions between our people of different religious traditions, and spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels. That interfaith dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions or beliefs to increase acceptance of each other.

— DR. HAMDY EL-SAWAF
Islamic Community Center of Minnesota

LEGACIES ARE BUILT over centuries and today we celebrate The Basilica of Saint Mary's 150 years of continuous dedication and commitment — not just to the spiritual elevation of its own community — but to the communities that surround The Basilica as well.

I have had the honor of presenting a variety of topics on Islam at The Basilica. The congregation has a special place in my heart because, in the divisive times we live in, The Basilica is asking the right questions and facilitating conversations that go beyond the surface. It's digging deep and seeking to bridge communities through education, understanding, and empowerment.

I have no doubt that the spirit in which The Basilica is operating will ensure a legacy that will live on for many more centuries to come.

— HANADI CHEHABEDDINE

FOR MORE than a century, Minneapolis College and The Basilica have stood side-by-side as neighbors along Hennepin Avenue with the common mission of creating hope and serving the needs of the community.

In 1914, the parish celebrated its first Mass in the new Basilica building and the College was founded as the Girls Vocational School by education pioneer Elizabeth Fish. The 1960s brought significant change as neighborhood dynamics changed, the new freeway system was constructed, and traffic increased. With both institutions firmly established on the western edge of Minneapolis in the 1990s, The Basilica introduced an annual rock concert to raise funds for restoration and outreach ministries and Minneapolis Technical College and Minneapolis Community College merged to serve a broader segment of the city's population.

Since the turn of the century, our two neighboring institutions have continued to advance shared missions to serve the community through continually expanding their facilities, outreach and offerings. The stretch of Hennepin Avenue we watch over has become a symbol of hope, inclusivity, growth, and unity in social well-being.

— PRESIDENT SHARON PIERCE
Minneapolis College



THE BASILICA of Saint Mary stands as a witness to faith, hospitality, compassion and the presence of God. Whether in a wooden shed or in the awe-inspiring grandeur of The Basilica sanctuary, the faithful are the hands, voice, and heart of God for the city. As you mark the 150th anniversary, we give thanks for your witness and our life together as people of faith in the city.

— REV. PETER NYCKLEMOE
Central Lutheran Church

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CONGRATULATIONS to The Basilica of Saint Mary on reaching the significant milestone of 150 years of ministry in Minneapolis. The Basilica's leadership among Roman Catholics and in the broader community has been enormously important. The Basilica has participated faithfully in ecumenical projects in Minneapolis for decades. More recently The Basilica has helped animate interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the city. Minneapolis needs a strong Basilica; as one of your urban partners, Westminster is thrilled that at 150 years you are as vital as ever! May God continue to bless your ministry for generations to come.

— REV. DR. TIM HART ANDERSEN
Westminster Presbyterian Church

AS WITH OUR PATRIARCH Abraham's tent, The Basilica is open to all for spiritual and physical nourishment. As a neighbor in geography and history we are proud to partner in the spirit of the Nostra Aetate and with the Transfer of Memory exhibit. As Pope Francis says: "Life is a journey." Thank you for helping our entire community along the way and looking forward to the next 150 years working with the wonderful Basilica family — Mazel Tov!

— STEVE HUNEGS
Jewish Community Relations Council
of Minnesota and the Dakotas

SAINT MARK'S EPISCOPAL Cathedral proudly engages with The Basilica at a number of fruitful and life-giving levels. The Basilica's direct service work is a wonderful blessing to the community, and we proudly share a commitment to advocacy and public policy to address root causes of large-scale, chronic human need. The Basilica's efforts to be a beacon of faithful service in a hurting world are admirable, and we wish you ongoing success in continuing to change lives for people in Minneapolis and beyond.

— THE VERY REV. PAUL J. LEBENS-ENGLUND
Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral

JEREMIAH PROGRAM, a nationally recognized two-generation strategy to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty, was founded in Minneapolis on The Basilica's vision to seek the well-being of the city and create a future full of hope. For the families served by Jeremiah Program since 1998 and all who are part of it, the opportunity has been transformative.

Through the engagement of Basilica parishioners and their collaboration with other congregations and community partners, Jeremiah Program was founded on the notion that our futures are inextricably connected. We know the value that comes from providing a safe, stable, and nurturing home for children. We also know the value of educating a mother.

We have seen that when we build bridges between various sectors — faith, government, business, education and philanthropy — and build on the strengths of our community, we become stronger and get closer to living the life God intended for us. A life filled with love, generosity, hope, and humility. The Basilica has been a catalyst for hope locally and across the country; our hearts are filled with gratitude and the promise of a bright future.

— GLORIA PEREZ
Jeremiah Program

THE MAGNIFICENT Basilica has always had a profound impact on the skyline of the city. But more important has been the work you can't always see and touch; opening doors for those most in need, being a common ground for people across the boundaries of income and race, and simply being a place where we could be replenished from the day to day. As someone who was on the ground floor of The Basilica Block Party, it's not a bad place to listen to music either. Thank you for all you've done.

— R.T. RYBAK
The Minneapolis Foundation
Former Mayor of Minneapolis

"The Basilica has been a catalyst for hope locally and across the country; our hearts are filled with gratitude and the promise of a bright future."

— GLORIA PEREZ
Jeremiah Program

JESUS SAID, "Love your neighbors!" And we do! It is with great love and thanksgiving that the people of Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church celebrate that for 150 years your congregation has demonstrated your love for God and this neighborhood by being a beacon of justice and joy for the City of Minneapolis and beyond.

You truly live out your calling to be light and a blessing to all peoples with passion and heart. In you, we see the face of God. We give God thanks for your enduring witness as you show us what God can do when people love with extravagant generosity and radical hospitality that looks and feels just like Jesus. We pray that God will continue to bless us as we are neighbors together, serving side by side bringing hope and joy to all generations. May your next 150 years be as fruitful and faithful as ever.

— REV. JUDY ZABEL
Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church

THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY has been a loyal and powerful partner with Temple Israel in our multi-religious commitment to the city of Minneapolis. I feel honored to speak from the pulpit at The Basilica on Good Friday. Having a Rabbi speak at a Catholic Church during the Tenebrae service, which has been historically a time of conflict, turns it into a time of historic healing and a courageous act. We at Temple feel a great sense of pride at our friendship with your iconic Basilica. Thank you for welcoming us into your home. And thank you for what The Basilica has done for our city and interfaith dialogue.

— RABBI MARCIA ZIMMERMAN
Temple Israel

