EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

The Basilica During the Pandemic
CONTENTS

FEATURES

6 Lights, Camera, Mass
A look behind The Basilica livestream
by Mae Desaire

9 Planned Giving
An incredible blessing
by Nick Hansen

10 Adapt, Pivot, Change
Extrodinary times – The Basilica during the pandemic
Edited by Melissa Streit

14 Learning to Love Zoom
Children’s and youth ministries and Sacrament preparation

17 Care and Support Ministries
Accompany, Serve, Defend

19 Extending a Welcome
Wherever you are, we welcome you

22 Providing a Safe Space
Safely coming to The Basilica

26 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at The Basilica
An interview with Sarah Bellamy
by Joan Prairie

28 Familiar Faces in a New Role
Meet Mary McMahon and Anne Kane
by Melissa Streit

30 Love in the Time of COVID
Marriage ministry in pandemic
by Rachel Newman Hogness

DEPARTMENTS

3 From the Editor

4 From the Rector, Fr. John Bauer

5 President’s Column, by Mary McMahon

25 Ask Johan, by Johan M.J. van Parys, Ph.D.

32 Archives, by Heather Craig

About the Cover: Good Friday, Tenebrae Liturgy (2018)

COVER PHOTO/MAE DESAIRE
IT’S an understatement—and at this point, a cliché—to say that 2020 was filled with a lot of bad news. At this time a year ago, many of us couldn’t fathom how drastically our world would change and how much our communities would have to reckon with the fallout of the pandemic, increased civil unrest, racial injustice, and more. Over a year into the pandemic, we’re all still finding ways to navigate our new normal, on a personal and public level.

Here at The Basilica, our staff and volunteers found new ways to celebrate the liturgies and advance the mission of seeking the well-being of our city in a time when so many desperately need healing and connection. Within these pages, you’ll hear more about how engaged couples changed their wedding plans (“Love in the Time of COVID”), how catechists continued to lead faith formation (“Adapt, Pivot, Change”), and how the whole team navigated new technologies and safety protocols to continue bringing our parishioners the Eucharist, in person and at a distance (“Lights, Camera, Mass”).

I feel a little guilty saying that 2020 was not a bad year for me at all. As I write this, my newborn daughter, Ingrid, naps in the bassinet beside me. Born in December, she is one of many “coronials,” a word my labor and delivery nurse made up to describe the babies born into the pandemic. One day, I’m sure I’ll tell her about the year she was born—how her dad attended ultrasound appointments via FaceTime, how her aunt planned a Zoom baby shower, how I wore a mask during our first moments together—but mostly, I hope to tell her how much I looked forward to her arrival in a year of bad news and canceled plans.

Here’s hoping that 2021 is filled with more bright spots and things to look forward to and that all of 2020’s adjustments helped us find stillness, clarity, and new ways to keep connected to the community and people we love.

— Rachel Newman Hogness
The origin of the phrase “the church has left the building” lies with Elvis Presley. In order to clear halls of his riotous fans after concerts, it was announced that “Elvis has left the building.” In many ways, these past several months, it feels like the Church has left the building, as congregations have been asked or ordered not to gather as usual because of the coronavirus. I think all of us feel profoundly the loss of community as we have known it. We miss gathering with others, and worshipping and praying together. I know I miss stepping into the pulpit and looking at familiar faces smiling back at me. When we gather again as we used to—and I believe we will—I suspect Church will have a renewed meaning for us.

We all know that “church” is more than just a building. And when we use the word “church” we mean more than just a building. We mean the people. We mean our gathering together as a people of faith. We mean our common worship and prayer, our conversations and being together as a community. We mean the practices that renew our faith each week. And as Catholics particularly, we mean that the “church” is the body of Christ.

If there has been any blessing in these past several months, it is that churches in general, and The Basilica in particular, have worked to create new ways and opportunities for worship. We have tried to reach out to all those who are searching for a spiritual connection. And we have found new ways to be “church” in these challenging times. And yet, I have missed gathering in a building—specifically our beautiful Basilica—to pray and worship together.

It was a great grace when, even in small numbers, people were able to come back to our beautiful Basilica for public worship. I say this, because I believe we are built for relationship. We are made for community. We need each other. And it is hard for us to recognize this, and even harder for this to happen when we are isolated and separated from each other. Coming together in a building to worship facilitates our being “church.”

Now certainly we don’t need a building to be “church.” We are the Church, whether we are together or at home. Additionally, and as importantly, our faith needs to reach beyond the walls of a church building into the everyday life we live. Who we are and how we live should flow seamlessly between those worlds without friction or tension. We need to live what we preach, which is: the Church is not just a building, but a group of people who believe in the power of God to transform their lives. A building isn’t essential for this—but from my perspective, it certainly does help.

— Fr. John Bauer
The Basilica Landmark
Our gratitude this past year

DESPITE an unprecedented year for The Basilica Landmark, our Board of Directors remains grateful. Thanks to your support, we were able to pivot, adapt, and complete many necessary projects. The Landmark mission is to preserve, restore, and advance the historic Basilica of Saint Mary for generations. Our goal is to fund essential restoration projects that would be difficult for the parish to undertake from its own operating budget every year. This partnership empowers The Basilica to serve its more than 12,000 parishioners as well as the greater community.

The Landmark staff and Board of Directors continually reviews an extensive list of necessary projects required to maintain our beautiful historic buildings and prioritize projects based on available funds, thanks to our generous donors.

This past year we have been fortunate to complete projects that will strengthen the church’s structure and positively impact our building and the community going forward. The masonry restoration on the upper western façade of the church and was an urgent priority and was completed first. Also, we performed the necessary maintenance and installed a new blower unit for the organ.

Our investment in livestreaming equipment and the training of staff to operate it has benefited our entire community. Our broadened digital reach has allowed us all to stay connected as a community. Also, the installation of two needlepoint bipolar ionization units to remove viruses (including SARS and COVID-19), allergens, and mold from the air offers peace of mind when we gather in the main church or lower levels, including Teresa.

We did not anticipate adding livestream capabilities or the air purification system in 2020, but determined the projects to be crucial to our mission. Your support allows the Landmark flexibility to shift priorities in response to current circumstances. You can read more about each of these and other Landmark accomplishments in the article on page 19 that highlights the development department’s work.

Please mark your calendars and join us virtually for our annual gala, Landmark Spark, on May 15, 2021. It’s sure to be a bright and lively evening for all.

My heartfelt appreciation for the support of our Landmark donors. It will be lovely to see some of you virtually on May 15.

— Mary McMahon, President of The Basilica Landmark
Lights, Camera, Mass

A look behind
The Basilica livestream

RISING TO THE CHALLENGES
OF THE PANDEMIC
I: March–April, 2020

THROUGHOUT the past year, as we have lived through a global pandemic, we have had to continually adapt and change to our new world. On March 18, 2020, The Basilica announced it was suspending all public Masses, Confession, and Stations of the Cross until further notice to protect people from possible exposure to COVID-19 and for the common good and welfare of our community. This was the season of Lent, and we were preparing for our Holy Week and Easter celebrations.

Throughout those early weeks of March 2020, public gatherings and worship were not recommended for anyone with health concerns. Each week, new statistics and guidelines were released. Archbishop Hebda issued the dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation until further notice on March 12. Many people did not feel safe gathering for Mass but yearned for the nourishment of the liturgies in a time of crisis.

Those early days of the pandemic were frightening and stressful, but as a staff The Basilica team knew we needed to serve our community. We needed to embrace the challenge and reimagine our liturgies. We knew we needed to make the leap and start providing online videos of our Masses and services. We had talked about it off and on for years—the logistics, technology, equipment, platforms—but we always thought we had more time to work out all of the details.

The time to jump in and start was now upon us. We started livestreaming our first Stations of the Cross on Facebook on March 13. From there, we grew everyday and started livestreaming Sunday Mass on March 15, weekday Mass in the sacristy on Thursday, March 19, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Friday, March 20. Our team was filming entirely on an iPhone. We would livestream each service on Facebook and post the recorded videos to our website.

Looking back now, the early videos in hindsight were rough—sound, lighting, camera placement…we were just trying the best we could, while managing our way through each day in a crisis. Our community was forgiving. Each thankful and kind post and email provided the encouragement our team needed to keep striving to make each video better. Each day, we learned something new. We were continually googling new tips and ordered new microphones, lights, and tripods.

As Holy Week quickly approached, we knew we needed to provide a beautiful, engaging liturgical experience for our community watching at home. With support from our parishioners, we were able to hire a professional film crew and livestreaming team just in time for Palm Sunday.
SERVING OUR COMMUNITY
AT A TIME OF CRISIS
II: April–July, 2020

John Gorski and his team from QuickCast came to The Basilica the week before Palm Sunday and started mapping out camera placement and setting up their equipment. Thankfully, Gorski was very familiar with The Basilica and had been involved in music ministry in past years. This was a huge advantage, as The Basilica’s space, lighting, and sound have specific challenges to address.

Watching the team work to create a beautiful liturgical experience for the small screen was incredible. We received an overwhelming reaction of support and appreciation for the livestream. We felt relief and confidence that we could produce a Holy Week experience that would meet the challenges of the extraordinary times. With no time to waste, our entire liturgy team was working urgently to finalize all of the details for a live-streamed Holy Week.

Our livestream viewers reached over 25,000 on Easter Sunday. We watched on Facebook and the website platform as views and comments came in from all over the United States and the world. As was pictured in our last issue of BASILICA Magazine, the Archbishop blessed the City of Minneapolis in a snow-storm, and we were able to share it with thousands of people. It was not the Easter we had originally planned, but it was still an exceptional Easter experience.

After Easter, we planned to continue contracting with QuickCast to film each Sunday, as we started planning to purchase our own livestream equipment. This process started with collecting proposals from several local installers and working with a specialized technical consultant. Bringing in a higher level of expertise in this area helped to address our specific needs for the system. As we planned to take over the livestreaming process, we mapped out a staffing plan to have team members trained to produce our live-stream entirely in-house, without outside technical support. The new system needed to meet our quality standards and be user-friendly enough for our Basilica staff to successfully utilize. It was a tall order, and it took months to sort out all the details.

There were some major delays along the way. Most of the camera equipment factories in China had been shut down due to the pandemic, creating a global shortage during a time when the demand for livestreaming cameras and equipment was skyrocketing. Fortunately, QuickCast was able to continue on each week as we waited for our equipment to arrive. Once our equipment was delivered, our selected installer brought in the crew to start working. They laid down hundreds of feet of cabling and spent days setting up cameras, computers, monitors, and switch boards.

During this time, we continued to film weekday Mass in the Sacristy with an iPhone, working to continually enhance the experience for our community. Our weekday Mass virtual attendees created an online community that has thrived, posting messages of encouragement and appreciation for our presiders and staff. Many people have told us that they could not have attended Noon Mass in person, but are now able to join online and have grown in faith by being able to experience Mass each day.

SUPPORTING OUR MISSION
AND VALUES IN NEW WAYS
III: July–September, 2020

In early July, our new camera equipment installation was complete and our first staff training was held on July 8. From there our team jumped in and started training everyday. We filmed our first weekday Mass in the main church on July 15. This was an exciting day, as it was also the first public Mass at The Basilica since mid-March. Throughout that week, our team continued to practice filming. We contracted with QuickCast one final Sunday Mass on July 17 and then transitioned to our staff team completely.

Our staff team filmed our first Sunday Mass at 9:30am on July 26. As a member of the team, we felt a huge sense of accomplishment. We had launched new technology, equipment, and started serving
our community in an entirely new way in a matter of months. We could feel the outpouring of support and appreciation throughout our staff and parishioners with over 700 live attendees between both our mary.org platform and Facebook.

Our team continues to make adjustments and learn new techniques every day. We continually have to update platforms, work through Facebook integration updates, adjust camera angles, and make sound and lighting adjustments. Filming live with six cameras creates a huge set of challenges. The team at the camera board has to be ready to anticipate every movement on the altar.

Our liturgy team has worked to adapt liturgical movements and music ministry to accommodate camera angles and lighting. “Providing the best liturgical experience for our community participating at home,” our Director of Liturgy, Johan van Parys, stated, “has been quite the learning curve for our entire team. Our greatest concern from the beginning has been to assure that people who are at home feel connected to what is happening in The Basilica, not just as spectators but as participants. To that end we must not only celebrate the liturgy well, but we also must take into account camera angles and location for our celebrant, lectors, and musicians. The quality of the cameras is, of course, very important, but the way in which we use them is what makes us attain our stated goal.”

Throughout the summer, we continued to reach new milestones and serve our Basilica community in new ways. We livestreamed our first Baptism Mass on July 26, our first funeral July 31, and our first wedding August 7. This has been a wonderful service to offer our families, given that attendance for these services is limited for social distancing health and safety protocols.

We reopened for our first Sunday Mass on August 2 at 11:30 am. We limited the number of pre-registrations to 50 and had 42 attendees. Singing was limited to a cantor and small ensemble, out of abundance of caution, to limit any virus spread.

BUILDING OUR LIVESTREAM MINISTRY

IV: The Future

We plan to continue to livestream the Sunday 9:30 am and Weekday Noon Masses and prayer services even once our life at The Basilica resumes on whatever level that may be in the future. We see this new ministry as an opportunity to reach beyond The Basilica walls and welcome people in new ways to our community.

We closely monitor our viewer analytics each week and continue to set goals for further engagement with our home attendees.

The message and responses from those who cannot return to attending Mass in person for the foreseeable future are encouraging and help us to continue to grow and enhance our livestream ministry. We are so thankful to our community for supporting the investment in this ministry and the possibilities it creates for the future. ♦

Mae Desaire is the Director of Marketing and Communications.

Experiencing Mass at Home

Karla Edin

“I’m grateful for the opportunity to feel like I’m still a part of The Basilica community even though we can’t physically gather together. Watching Sunday Mass has been a point of grounding and connection during times when I’ve felt unmoored and days have blurred together. The high quality of the music and homilies has reminded me why I choose to call The Basilica my spiritual home. I miss being able to serve our community as an usher and Eucharistic minister very much, but without those responsibilities I’ve had time and space to participate in the liturgy in a new and more focused way, even if it is from my living room!”

Mary Noble

“Grateful is the feeling that comes to mind when I think of The Basilica’s livestream of daily and Sunday Masses. As an active volunteer at The Basilica, I felt lost when the church closed to the public. Fortunately, our leadership was open to reaching out to the congregation through Facebook and computer livestream. My having access to daily Mass helped give me daily grounding from the stresses and events around me. Thanks so much for providing this wonderful service to the members of our Basilica family.”

Bob Welch

“We have watched several different livestream Masses during COVID-19 and to us The Basilica’s felt more like real church. The production was quite good with various camera shots of those in the Mass as well as the beauty of The Basilica. The focus on the music, especially during the Eucharist, was enjoyable and appreciated. We also liked that the Act of Spiritual Communion was read aloud.”
THOUGH Earl and Virginia Geiger may not have realized it over 20 years ago, their foresight to plan for the future turned into an incredible blessing for their family, friends, and church in 2020. In 1997, they decided to create a charitable remainder trust and give the proceeds to The Basilica Landmark after they died. The Basilica Landmark is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit separate from The Basilica of Saint Mary, created to care for the preservation, restoration, and advancement of The Basilica of Saint Mary campus for all generations.

After 79 years of marriage, the two passed away within hours of each other at Friendship Village in Bloomington in May of 2020. Earl and Virginia were active and dedicated parish members. “They had the routine. My kids always remember Mass and the Minneapolis Women’s Club for brunch. It was a tradition, and the whole family recognized that. It was central to their lives,” said their son, Tom Geiger.

Planning the Geiger’s funeral was difficult for the family, and the limitations due to the pandemic added another level of stress. However, there was one part of the process that was easy for the family: finances. Planning financial decisions ahead of time gave the Geiger family peace of mind. “It was probably the easiest part of the whole ordeal of the passing,” said Tom.

While the Geigers’ gift was a charitable remainder trust, there are many different avenues for planned giving. According to Susan Link, chair of the Planned Giving Committee with The Basilica Landmark, “Planned giving is helping people to include charitable gifts in their estate planning documents, be it their will or charitable trust, or naming The Basilica Landmark as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy or a retirement account.”

A charitable remainder trust is a “tax-exempt irrevocable trust designed to reduce the taxable income of individuals by first dispersing income to the beneficiaries of the trust for a specified period of time and then donating the remainder of the trust to the designated charity,” according to the website Investopedia.

While it may seem an arduous task, putting aside a planned gift ahead of time was beneficial in more ways than one. “It was really important that we went through that process back then for a couple of reasons. One was setting expectations. The Geiger’s children all understood that The Basilica Landmark was going to be the recipient of this. There wasn’t any misunderstanding about that later. Also in that final year, my dad had some challenges with memory and the condition he was in,” said Tom. “His ability to make that decision was important.”

One misconception that people have about planned gifts is that they need to work with a lawyer to plan out the gifts. That’s not true, according to Link. You can name The Basilica Landmark as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy or a retirement account without a lawyer. Most of the time, you can make these changes online.

Another misconception involves how much someone can leave as a gift. “You don’t have to be a wealthy person to be making planned gifts. I think any amount is appreciated,” said Link. “It does not cost you anything to make a gift, especially if you’re doing it as a beneficiary designation. That is literally just getting online and filling it out.” Planned gifts also give The Basilica Landmark the ability to more effectively plan out future projects if they know a gift will be coming in the future.

The Basilica community was able to celebrate the lives of Earl and Ginny through a livestreamed funeral service in June. While it wasn’t what the family initially planned, many people were so glad they had an opportunity to pay their respects.

“It was such a hard time because of COVID-19, and I think there are a lot of folks that would have wanted to be there and most of the family is living elsewhere and didn’t feel comfortable flying in. It was such a powerful service. Having it live-streamed allowed many people to comment on it,” said Tom.

Planned giving allows The Basilica Landmark to invest and plan for the future. This is especially important during this year, according to Link, “The benefit that comes to the Basilica Landmark by people doing this is incredible.”

Nick Hansen has been an active volunteer and parish member since 2015.
Adapt, Pivot, Change

Extraordinary times –
The Basilica during the pandemic

It is a colossal understatement to say that our lives changed in 2020. People, organizations, and institutions worldwide were upended and a return to “normal” still looms somewhere on the horizon. As Johan van Parys, our Director of Liturgy and Sacred Arts, summarized, “nothing has been the same since we first were asked to close The Basilica. One of our great concerns was, and continues to be, engaging members of our community. If we are not able to gather, how can we stay connected with The Basilica and with one another?” The Basilica strived to both preserve and reimagine our ministries and services to provide an anchor rooted in faith during the turbulent storm of unease and change.

The Basilica’s uncharted pandemic journey started abruptly when we closed last spring and continued with a gradual opening in the latter half of 2020. We don’t yet know what fully reopening The Basilica will look like in 2021, which has been arduous for staff and parishioners alike. In a year-end reflection, pastor Fr. John Bauer shared, “there have been a seemingly never-ending number of adaptations and adjustments we have had to make, often with little or no notice.” We can all cite numerous examples of adaptations and adjustments in our lives; so it is for our Basilica parish and ministries as well.

Our different Basilica departments share the many ways they’ve learned to adapt, pivot, and change throughout the arc of these extraordinary times. In the next pages, we look back at The Basilica’s journey during the pandemic and look forward to the unknown.

Outdoor Blessing of the Bambinelli: Fr. Bauer and Johan van Parys, Ph.D., blessed the Christ Child from parish member’s home nativity sets in front of the parish office building on 17th Street on December 20, 2020.


EDITED BY MELISSA STREIT
LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

"NOTHING has been the same since we closed The Basilica due to the COVID-19 pandemic," Johan van Parys says ruefully. “These past months have been challenging, and yet we have been able to reimagine the ways we serve our mission while wading through this uncharted territory.”

The first great shift was from in-person worship to virtual worship. For the first few Sundays we livestreamed Sunday Mass from a single iPhone. Next, thanks to a generous parishioner, we hired a professional video company. Now we own equipment that is permanently installed in The Basilica, and most of our staff has been trained to help with the livestream of liturgies. In July we started to gradually reopen some of our liturgies to in-person worship. Nevertheless, the majority of those worshipping with us continue to do so virtually. Throughout the pandemic, our goal has been and continues to be the full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy by all, even those joining via livestream.

In addition to temporarily closing our liturgies to in-person participation, we made major shifts in terms of our liturgical ministries. We were unable to engage the hundreds of liturgical ministers who usually proclaim the Word, welcome those joining us for worship, and distribute Holy Communion. Our many choirs and music ensembles were unable to gather for rehearsal or to sing at Mass. Thankfully, we are now gradually and deliberately starting to re-engage our liturgical ministers and musicians.

CHOIR LIFE IN A PANDEMIC

“Like everyone, my world seemed to come crashing to a halt mid-March when we were ordered to shelter in place and quarantine,” recalls Walter Tambor, our Director of Contemporary and World Music. “No going into the office, no choir rehearsals, no singing, no assembling with volunteers. Not only were we faced with unknown challenges of an unfamiliar and unpredictable virus, but we were commissioned to bring our beautiful Basilica services into the homes of our community via livestream.”

“Live worship is carefully planned and prepared,” Tambor continues, “knowing things can be organic and are shaped and fed by the faithful gathered in the pews. But what happens when the people you hope to inspire through your music, spiritually ignite through song, and deepen in prayer experience are absent from your sight and spread across the metro area, the state, and even the country?” Tambor gratefully cites the planning, coordination, and alacrity of spirit from both staff and musicians, to successfully capture and translate the immensity of live Basilica worship to the intimate small screen home experience.

Technology and video recording adds additional liturgical music considerations. “There is a heightened responsibility to excellence when your work will be recorded and presented for the whole world to see at any time,” explains Teri Larson, Director of Music. “You distill and refine your musical choices, savor and caress each poignant phrase, accentuate and emphasize meaningful texts, and pray that you present your best work for the glory of God.”

Continued
Larson notes the unexpected benefits of technology as well. “Although we long for the time to be together again,” she said, “we are blessed to have these virtual means of communication to keep in contact with the wonderful members of our choirs. We’ve also been able to gather virtually with special guests, including composers who live in other parts of the country.”

Modern technology has allowed the singers and musicians to be together when in-person activities are not possible. Larson shares examples of small breakout groups where singers can get to know one another better, and a willingness to try new things because people are in their comfortable personal spaces. Many of our music ensembles have produced virtual performances to share online.

**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MUSICAL**

How could we have the annual children’s Christmas musical in the midst of the pandemic? How could we not? Those were the questions the team posed. Thinking creatively and safely, we adapted *Light of the World* by Mark Patterson to be filmed leading up to Christmas.

As each scene tells the story of the birth of Christ, family groupings filmed independently to narrate, sing, and provide visual representations of the story. Adhering to safety protocols, our Juventus and Choristers youth ensembles provided additional music, hand chime accompaniment, and the traditional *Silent Night* in multiple languages.

**CELEBRATION OF THE SACRED ARTS**

In March 2020, we had just finished installing a new art exhibit celebrating the religious Oeuvre of Georges Rouault in the lower level of the church. Sadly, no one except for a few staff members were able to enjoy it. The remaining exhibits for 2020 the first half of 2021 were canceled. We devised some alternative ways to celebrate the sacred arts through weekly *Art that Surrounds Us* videos and online exhibits. Hopefully by Fall 2021 exhibits will return.
Concerts, both by our own musicians and by outside groups, were also canceled; it is our fervent hope that our concert season will be in full swing by this coming fall. Many of our visiting choirs and orchestras have created virtual concerts that are available on their websites. The National Lutheran Choir filmed and recorded part of their virtual concerts at The Basilica.

In a weekly video, *Art That Surrounds Us*, Johan van Parys shares information about a piece in The Basilica's art collections. Highlights of the series include several icons, sculptures and statues, architectural elements, paintings, and the Mary Garden.

Slideshows were created on mary.org for the annual Icon Festival and Crèche exhibit. We are building online galleries for all the art in The Basilica's collections, gradually adding photos and descriptions. Our collections include art, paintings, sculpture, textiles, vestments, vessels, furniture and archival items. Some of this art is displayed in the church or other areas on campus. Other pieces are kept in climate-controlled storage for part of the year and brought outseasonally or periodically for particular feast days or liturgical seasons.

**THE WORK OF OUR DOCENTS**

Although it has been months since we offered church tours, the recollection of visitors lighting up as they walk into the main church is still heartwarming. The weekly arrival of school children, church organizations from a variety of faith traditions, educational programs, and out-of-town visitors are missed. The Basilica volunteer docents eagerly await the day when our doors will open to visitors, and they can do what they do best: share their knowledge and love of The Basilica of Saint Mary. Until then, our website offers a virtual tour of our home. In addition, the weekly *Art that Surrounds Us* videos provide a glimpse of the treasures that we might not have an opportunity to see, even on tours.

**Reflections by Parishioners**

**Mandy Pascual**

“Thank you for extra effort to make the children’s Christmas musical happen. Not only is it wonderful for the kids to be able to participate in something they enjoy so much, but also teaches them by example that we can adapt and make the world a better place even during these strange times.”

**Maureen Bourgeois**

“I have greatly appreciated both the livestream and in person Masses. Although I missed being in ministry during the Mass, it has been nice to gather with fellow liturgical ministers online doing a variety of prayer forms.”

**Gary Summerville**

“I miss my Altar Guild ministries, both the prayerful peace and quiet when working alone and the spiritual fellowship working with others preparing for liturgical celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. I also miss serving at Mass especially serving as an acolyte, distributing Holy Communion, and the processions.”

**Jan Buczek**

“I am so thankful for all of my gifts...my family and my Basilica family. During this time of ‘shelter in place,’ I miss these ministries more than words can say.”
During the Easter season, we generally look forward to family celebrations of sacraments. Last Lent, we began our shelter-in-place order which postponed our celebrations of baptisms, first communions, and confirmations. Our baptism classes immediately shifted to virtual Zoom classes. Gradually, as we began to open up over the summer, we invited families back to celebrate these sacraments. At the end of July, we began inviting small groups of parents and godparents in for baptisms, which continue to take place monthly.

Rather than celebrate at one very large gathering, first communions and confirmations are each celebrated at three separate Masses, with 6-8 children/teens and their immediate family members. The last part of our preparation for students took place through recorded lessons and streamed videos.

Top: Children’s choir rehearsal on Zoom; Above: Nina Ackerman-Kruger First Communion with Fr. Bauer.
Our fall Faith Formation programs kicked off with “materials pick-up” days. Students received workbooks, prayer books, or Bibles. Each family also received prayer table kits, which included: a candle, rosary, prayer cards, holy water, and liturgical colored mini tablecloths. Students meet weekly on Zoom with their catechist, and they receive assignments through Google Classroom. This platform allows the catechist to share videos, see pictures of student assignments, and email the entire class with the click of a button.

COVID-19 has stretched us to think outside the box with regard to presentation of faith. All are anxious to share in person again some day. Community is not easily replicated in a Zoom meeting, but we are grateful to parents who help us stay connected.

BASILICA YOUNG ADULTS (BYA)

One of the most important aspects of young adult ministry (and really any ministry) is the great desire and need for community. Young adults especially seek to find other faith-filled peers, and that longing for community is even more prescient during this pandemic. Our Catholic Social Teaching that we have been made to be in communion with God and each other has been apparent time and again during the pandemic.

The Basilica Young Adults (BYA) began COVID-19 like everyone else during the initial shutdown, going to virtual Bible studies, trivia nights, happy hours, and other activities. As we moved into summer, many young adults got a little “Zoomed out,” and we moved activities outside, including our weekly Bible study, a fall retreat day at a local retreat center, and a night of “S’moresaries” (S’mores and a rosary).

Bible study moved back indoors during the late fall and winter months with safety protocols in place. We planned different activities through winter to keep young adults active and engaged through these challenging days.

Continued
RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

There were many things we needed to move our Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) virtual. Most of all this year we needed Zoom! We used Zoom for team planning, speaker sessions, sponsor training, fellowship, and prayer. One benefit of using Zoom is that everyone in The Basilica community is welcome to attend. We also recorded our sessions, so if someone was unavailable at our scheduled time, they could tune in later, or rewatch sessions. Sponsors have always been an integral part of RCIA; in a pandemic, they are essential. For inquirers new to The Basilica, their first real contact is with their sponsor.

A PRAYER FOR OUR UNCERTAIN TIMES

All Mighty God,
May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health and making their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options.
May we who have to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home. As fear grips our country, let us choose love.
And during this time when we may not be able to physically wrap our arms around each other, let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.
Amen.

— Written by Rev. Dr. William J Barber III
ACCOMPANY

Journeying with another through life’s transitions is always important, but never more so than now. As the pandemic closed down our community, Christian Life ministries quickly moved into virtual mode to accompany our sisters and brothers.

Basilica parishioners accompany people who are vulnerable in normal circumstances: college students who struggle with homelessness and poverty, as well as families seeking asylum or with relatives facing deportation. As COVID-19 created unique and life-threatening challenges to these families, Basilica accompanying relationships became lifelines. Our volunteers continued journeying with their partners through all forms of online and phone support, even beginning new relationships with families from Honduras, Lebanon, and Guatemala.

Employment Ministry moved onto Zoom and virtual phone meetings, expanding its reach to many people who lost their jobs. Our employment coaches received specific training to work with people during COVID-19.

The reach of our Caring Ministries expanded to support people isolated from family, often unable to gather even for funerals. Emmaus Ministers brought the presence of The Basilica community through over 65 new outreaches to parishioners experiencing grief. We also mailed over 90 prayer shawls to offer comfort during this time.

SERVE

Core to The Basilica mission is our commitment to service. With a focus on the common good, and a particular care for the most vulnerable, we recognize and meet the needs of our brothers and sisters.

As COVID-19 hit Minnesota in last March, everything closed: congregations, libraries, coffee shops, non-profit organizations. The impact on our brothers and sisters who experience homelessness was immense. There were no longer bathrooms to use, a shortage of potable water, no coffee or sandwiches. Families in our community had no place to go for assistance with basic needs. The Basilica suspended our St. Vincent de Paul Ministries. Volunteers could no longer participate. Our ability to respond to the needs of our community was suddenly halted.

With urgency, The Basilica moved into gear. We placed portable toilets and hand-washing stations in our parking lot. The Rectory creatively facilitated offering coffee, water, and sandwiches from a local sandwich vendor, while maintaining social distance.

With commitment, compassion, and creativity, The Basilica helped restart the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, an important program to prevent homelessness. Together with our partner congregations of Align Mpls, we re-engaged volunteers in a system offering Emergency Rental Assistance virtually, using phone and technology rather than in-person meetings.

Continued
This same creativity enabled us to restart our program providing legal ID cards. Identification is important for all facets of life: to secure employment, housing, vote, and more. Once Hennepin County offices reopened, we collaborated to enable our volunteers to provide virtual assistance with ID cards.

After being closed for several months, our Pathways Life Skills program started to meet outdoors in summer. It moved inside in October, socially distancing and supporting one another. There are so many ways we are still limited in our service, yet we are committed to increasing the way we respond each day.

Employment Ministry:
- 9 job coaches
- 12 meetings per week of participants with coaches
- 40 new participants joined the ministry since March 16, 2020
- 36 participants have gotten jobs since March 16, 2020

Through the COVID months, SVdP provided:
- Volunteers met with over 5 families per week to provide rent assistance
- Volunteers connected with 50 individuals per week to provide legal IDs

DEFEND

2020 offered great challenges for personal health and public health. It uncovered traumatic effects of systemic inequity and injustice. Basilica Life Ministries partnered with community leaders to help parishioners understand these extraordinary days, experience healing, and discern meaningful action. Together, we created virtual forums for people throughout our Archdiocese and beyond.

The forum “Grief In Our City” brought leaders from North Minneapolis together with experts in mental health to help participants understand and begin to heal from the pandemic and civil unrest after the killing of George Floyd.

Grounding ourselves in our faith, we gathered virtually for “Beyond The Political Din.” This three-part series invited us to wrestle with our faith and to discern ways to live as engaged citizens. Another series brought local and national leaders on immigration together, calling us to meaningful action.

Webinars enabled us to host national authors, gathering people from throughout the United States. Author Nora McInerny offered encouragement and perspective to the challenges we face today. Dr. Henry Emmons spoke on The Science of Hope.

Partnering with the University of St. Thomas, we hosted a series exploring the “Theological Roots of Nationalism.” Dr. Michael Hollerich spoke virtually, inviting all to consider, from the German experience, how nationalism helped both Catholics and Protestants rationalize their collaboration related to WWII, and what their experience can teach us about nationalism’s challenges today.

Together, virtually or in-person, our faith compels us to learn, act, and advocate to change systems that cause hurt or violence. This work does not stop.

Reflections by Parishioners

Employment Ministry Participant
“I am forever grateful to the employment ministry, to the employment coaches, and to my beloved church for the help and assistance of job transition during these uncertain times. During this intense journey, employment assessments, exercises, and action items directed me on a path that led me from a job to my life’s work.”

Lou Cooney-Erickson
“The shawl I received from The Basilica when my son died is always on my bed and with me when I sleep. I’ve even included it as a necessity in my advanced directives!”

Lana Jones
“I love everything The Basilica has done and is doing for us.”
EVENTS

In the words of Fr. Bauer, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused The Basilica to adapt, adjust, and pivot. This has been true in regard to our fundraising and cultivation events. For some events, the pivot has been to press pause for a year; as was the case for the 2020 Basilica Block Party. In other cases, we have turned our focus to fundraising through digital communications, such as the 2020 Landmark Spark and the Basilica Ascension Golf Tournament. In our biggest pivots, we found small ways to connect with our community from the comfort of their homes with the help of virtual events via Zoom and pick-up activity kits.

Throughout these changes, we have learned how to best connect with our community in a time of social distancing. We have learned that sometimes technical difficulties cannot be avoided, and yes, we can freeze at very inopportune times. We have learned the importance of gathering in person and look forward to doing so again when the time is right. Most of all, we have been reminded of the support of our parish during these ever-changing times, who have accepted and navigated with us through the unknown.

As we plan for 2021 events, we wait for clarity. While there is much we do not yet know, we do know we will celebrate Landmark Spark on Saturday, May 15 in a virtual format! This cornerstone event supports the mission of The Basilica Landmark to preserve, restore, and advance the historic Basilica of Saint Mary for all generations. Visit thebasilicalandmark.org for the latest information.

In regard to our other 2021 events scheduled, we continue to plan and adjust according to state guidelines and hope to provide many experiences for our community in the coming year. We may not know when we will be able to gather in person again, but in the meantime, we are excited about the opportunities that virtual events provide.

Continued
FEATURE

EXPANDING OUR SKILLS

Development staff members have also been interested in finding new ways to support and advance the work of other departments at The Basilica. This has given us new opportunities to expand our skills and chances to collaborate with our peers across the organization. We have been especially inspired by the new livestreaming capabilities and the carefully executed plans to gradually reopen and offer safe options for worship and programming. Several of us have been trained on live-streaming equipment and help deliver daily Mass as well as other livestreamed prayer services and sacraments. Others are helping regularly with the check-in and health screening process for liturgies.

THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY

The daily work of our parish would not be possible without your financial contributions to The Basilica Fund which provides 79% of our annual operating budget. When you make a gift to The Basilica Fund you directly impact every aspect of parish life. You provide opportunities for community members to replace a lost job, for students to continue their faith formation, for young adults to connect with their peers, and for our Masses and sacraments to continue. Your generosity directly touches the lives and experience of our entire parish on a daily basis.

With fewer opportunities to gather in-person, we are encouraging our community to make a 2021 electronic recurring gift commitment to the Basilica Fund. Secure, online giving is simple; no need to remember cash or a check. It also means less paper and lower administrative costs, enabling your contribution to go further. By informing The Basilica of your giving plan for 2021, you also provide the parish with the most financial stability and the ability to make informed budget decisions throughout the year. Learn more about making a gift to The Basilica Fund here mary.org/give.

For my community to thrive, I must actively contribute: time, talent, and wealth.

THE BASILICA FUND

Felicia De Santos, parish member
The Basilica Landmark is a separate non-profit organization dedicated to preserve, restore, and advance The Basilica of Saint Mary for all generations. Established in 1993, The Basilica Landmark is a separate 501(c)(3) charitable organization, which stands alongside The Basilica of Saint Mary. Support comes from its annual fund appeal, the Basilica Block Party, Landmark Spark, and planned giving.

THEBASILICALANDMARK.ORG/GIVE

The tuck-pointing project this fall focused on the upper exterior western wall of The Basilica. Our historic Basilica requires continual tuck-pointing to repair the inevitable masonry deterioration at the mortar joints. The important work helps keep moisture out and protects the interior of the church building by preventing further water damage.

An unexpected project this year has been the installation of two needlepoint bipolar ionizations units to remove viruses (including SARS and COVID-19), allergens, and mold from the air of church, undercroft and choir room. This technology has helped us ensure the safety and well-being of all those who join us indoors at The Basilica.

In the article on page 9, you can learn more about the lasting legacy that planned gifts to The Basilica Landmark have on our community and its future—especially during these challenging times.

Looking forward, we have exciting long range plans for The Basilica’s historic buildings and our campus. We are optimistic that these will be underway once the pandemic lessens and economic conditions stabilize. While we cannot gather together, The Basilica of Saint Mary continues to be the vibrant parish and historic landmark you know and love. Thank you for sustaining our work and supporting our ability to adapt to current circumstances through your continued financial support. ∞
Providing a Safe Space

**SAFELY COMING TO THE BASILICA**

The Basilica is our spiritual home and a place of welcome. Now more than ever in these uncertain times, we want each person who enters The Basilica to feel as safe as possible. When we reopened for in-person Mass attendance in July 2020, The Basilica implemented new practices and protocols to follow health and safety best practices.

In line with CDC and government suggestions, guests with any of the following circumstances were invited to prayerfully consider refraining from in-person mass attendance:

- Experienced or has been near someone who experienced: cough, cold, flu, fever of 100°F +, shortness of breath, sore throat, or a loss of taste or smell.
- Has underlying medical conditions, including but not limited to: asthma, diabetes, heart condition, pregnancy, severe obesity, a compromised immune system, diseases of the lungs, kidneys, or liver, or are receiving cancer treatment.
- Lives in a nursing home, long-term care or congregant living facility.
- Is age 65 or over, particularly if unvaccinated.

Attendees enter The Basilica from one entrance, observing Basilica crest floor stickers to maintain six feet of space between parties. In the warmer summer months, our check in area was at an outdoor tent on the east lawn. In October, check-in moved indoors to the hallway outside our Saint Joseph Chapel in the ground level/Undercroft. Doors are propped open whenever possible to minimize touching.

All guests pre-register in advance and share contact information, in the unlikely event that we would need to do future contact tracing. Upon arrival, attendees are asked short health screening questions about possible COVID-19 symptoms and/or exposure and have their temperature taken via a no-touch temporal thermometer. Face masks are required over one’s nose and mouth at all times while inside our buildings.

Upon entrance to the main church, every other pew is closed off to allow for extra space. For Masses with communion, guests observing Basilica crest floor stickers to maintain six feet of space between parties approach the altar. Guests, still masked, sanitize their hands, approach the Eucharistic Minister, and fully extend their arms. The Eucharistic Minister also fully extends their arms and places the host onto the guest’s hands. The guest steps aside six feet, carefully lowers their face mask, and consumes their host. After replacing their mask, guests leave the building.

However you feel safe and comfortable for worship (virtual or in-person), we welcome you and are grateful for your participation.
Reflections by Parishioners

Jim Simon
“The team at The Basilica has made attending Mass in person safe and efficient with their online and call ahead registration processes and easy temperature check-in. I feel at ease attending Mass with these added precautions.”

Adam Sprenger
“I don’t worry when going to our beautiful Basilica; the wonderful staff makes me feel safe and welcome. The check in process is easy and the volunteers are professional and kind. They always call me by name and make me feel like family.”

Jennifer Frost
“As a check-in volunteer, I’ve enjoyed the opportunity to connect and spend time with my faith community in a safe way.”

Fr. Bauer’s greeting, “Wherever you are on your faith journey, we welcome you” holds especially true during a global pandemic. However you feel safe and comfortable for worship (virtual or in-person), we welcome you and are grateful for your participation. We are pleased to offer beautiful livestreamed Masses for anyone not yet comfortable with in-person worship and for anyone located farther from Minneapolis. At the writing this article, Archbishop Hebda’s dispensation on the obligation to attend Mass continues.

Our facilities team diligently increased their cleaning and sanitation efforts. Pews and kneelers are sprayed after each use. Commonly used spaces, including restrooms, handrails, banisters, and door handles, are cleaned after services and on regular schedules throughout the day. With deep gratitude to The Basilica Landmark, air filtration units have been installed for all three levels of the church building plus the rectory choir room to help purify the air.

Top, Health screening Christmas Eve in the Saint Joseph Chapel; Above, Socially distant Holy Communion line on Christmas Eve.
Dear God...

We pray for your love and compassion to abound as we walk through this challenging season.

We ask for wisdom for those who bear the load of making decisions with widespread consequences.

We pray for those who are suffering with sickness and all who are caring for them.

We ask for protection for the elderly and vulnerable to not succumb to the risks of the virus.

We pray for misinformation to be curbed, that fear may take no hold in hearts and minds.

As we exercise the good sense that you in your mercy provide, may we also approach each day in faith and peace, trusting in the truth of your goodness towards us.

Amen.
Dear Johan,

I understand Pope Francis recently made it possible for women to be lectors and acolytes. At The Basilica, we have been doing that for years. Were we wrong to do so?

Gentle Reader,

The Church has always had a rich diversity of ministries. By the third century we had episcopoi or overseers; presbyteroi or elders; diaconoi or helpers; lectors or readers; acolytes or servers; cantors or singers and each one of these ministries existed in its own right, serving the community in different ways. Over time, each ministry became more defined; expectations and ordinations were attached to each ministry; a clear hierarchy of ministries developed and the minor ministries or so-called minor orders came to be seen as stepping stones to major ministries or major orders. And because major orders were reserved to men, the minor orders came to be reserved for men as well. Everyone who was a member of any of these ministries or orders, even the lowest ones, was considered a member of the clergy or part of the clerical state. This was the case for hundreds of years.

In light of the Second Vatican Council, Saint Pope Paul VI in 1972 with his Motu Proprio Ministeria Quaedam made significant changes and abolished several ministries. In addition to the major orders of deacon, priest, and bishop, he kept the ministry of the word, or lector, and the ministry of the altar, or acolyte. Candidates for these two ministries were not to be ordained but rather were and continue to be installed or instituted. This, theoretically, opened a path for lay people to exercise these ministries.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law confirms in Canon 230 § 2 that “Lay persons can fulfill the function of lector in liturgical actions by temporary designation. All lay persons can also perform the functions of commentator or cantor, or other functions, according to the norm of the law.” In this canon, “lay persons” refers to both women and men. And although this canon does not mention acolytes or altar servers, a 1992 and then a 1994 clarification confirmed that the “other functions” mentioned in the 1983 canon also means altar servers. Still, the 1994 clarification left it up to the local bishop to decide for their own diocese if women could function as acolytes. Our archbishops agreed with the clarifications of Canon 230, and thus we have had women and men serve as lectors and acolytes.

Of note is that § 1 of Canon 230 stated that only “Lay men who possess the age and qualifications established by decree of the conference of bishops can be admitted on a stable basis through the prescribed liturgical rite to the ministries of lector and acolyte [...].” As a result, though the ministries have been open to laymen and women, only men could be installed in these ministries. In actuality, apart from some exceptions only men preparing for ordination have been installed in these ministries. For the most part, lectors and acolytes who are installed and those who are not can function in the same way. Although there are some exceptions, e.g. only installed acolytes can help with the purification of the vessels after Holy Communion.

In his Motu Proprio Spiritus Domini, published on January 10, 2021 Pope Francis states that lay women and men are henceforth able to be officially installed as lectors and acolytes. To that end, he changed the Code of Canon Law and Canon 230 § 1 now reads: “Lay persons of suitable age and with the gifts determined by decree of the Episcopal Conference may be permanently assigned, by means of the established liturgical rite, to the ministries of lectors and acolytes [...].” In a letter to Luis Cardinal Ladaria, the prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, Pope Francis explains that with this action he hopes to heighten a shared “awareness of baptismal dignity” for all Catholics. Furthermore he states that it is his intent that “this public recognition and a mandate on the part of the bishop will make more effective everyone’s participation in the work of evangelization.”

Now we wait to see what the impact of this change in Canon Law will be on the daily life of the Church. Will things shift and if so, when? Of note is that Pope Francis also asked the Congregation for Divine Worship to prepare for this new stipulation in the law.  

Johan M.J. van Parys, Ph.D., has been The Basilica’s director of liturgy and sacred arts since 1995.
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at The Basilica

An interview with Sarah Bellamy

Sarah Bellamy reflects on her work with Penumbra Theatre and The Basilica of Saint Mary

In 2016, after the death of Philando Castile, The Basilica recognized a need to address the important issue of racism in our lives and society. As we began this work, we were led to partner with Penumbra Theatre and engage with Sarah Bellamy, Penumbra Artistic Director. Through small group conversations and workshops with staff and parishioners, Sarah Bellamy created a strategic and comprehensive report for The Basilica: The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Opportunities and Challenges Analysis.

Upon completion of this analysis and reflection by parish leadership, initial recommendations of the report are being implemented. A twelve-member EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Leadership Team composed of parishioners began meeting September 2020. With guidance from Sarah Bellamy, they are working on parish-wide goals and strategies within The Basilica and the larger community.

PENUMBRA THEATRE EVOLUTION

When George Floyd was killed, it became very clear more resources in our community were needed and Penumbra would be among those resources. His death was also a tragic realization the work we intended to do is needed—an affirmation we were on the right path. It is so unfortunate that it takes someone’s death to make it clear to others this work is so badly needed.

The Penumbra Theatre, a 44-year-old Black arts organization, is evolving into a center for racial healing. In addition to launching new artistic offerings, the center provides racial equity coaching, leadership development, and supports people across sectors within the community.

Every organization attempting to do this work needs to be in conversations with other organizations. We need to be strategic—not duplicative—in our efforts. We need to use discernment to realize who our constituencies are and to figure out where our efforts can be most effective in helping people to feel equipped, strong, and courageous in working with people in addressing this deep wound.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BECOME ANTI-RACIST?

That is a complicated question, but the simplest answer is that to be anti-racist we must be actively and sustainably engaged in undoing the interlocking systems that endanger the lives and threaten the livelihoods of people of color.

Being anti-racist is an active resistance versus a passive lament. It means you are on a path that is constantly reflective, willing to learn, willing to stand up against injustice, willing to be uncomfortable situationally, psychologically, physically, and to put resources behind the effort.

Being uncomfortable doesn’t necessarily mean being in danger or feeling pain. It does mean that anyone who is currently comfortable with the world as it is, rife with the viciousness of disparity that people of color currently experience in sector after sector, must question that comfort and realize that is inextricable from racial privilege that exempts them from feeling acute disparity. Anti-racism means that people with racial privilege sacrifice those comforts that come at the expense of others suffering.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BASILICA

As this EDI Analysis was getting underway and the conversations and workshops were being held, the staff and parishioners were all welcoming and generous, as well as, being introspective and honest about what is not known and where there are knowledge gaps.

The staff is looking forward to undertaking this work in a deep, meaningful, and transformative way. If the work that needs to be done means that members of The Basilica will need to change, there seems to be excitement in seeing that happen.

As the EDI Leadership team works to define The Basilica’s EDI strategies and goals, we will do this in partnership together. The Basilica will take the lead with encouragement and guidance. With this working relationship, The Basilica will be equipped to create a plan and be empowered to carry the work forward.

Joan Prairie has been an active volunteer and parish member since 1993 and is a member of the EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Leadership Team.
In this extraordinary global pandemic, words like home, shelter, and safety have new and deeper meanings. Many of us learned first-hand that “sheltering at home” isn’t solely a physical experience—it is also spiritual. It is a feeling, a comfort, and a haven for both body and soul. For generations, every person who comes to The Basilica has received shelter. Some carry everything they own and find warmth and hope. Others come feeling empty and leave spiritually renewed. Every day and every season, both in-person and virtually, The Basilica is a haven for body and soul.

We welcome two familiar faces to new roles at The Basilica and The Basilica Landmark: Mary McMahon and Anne Kane. Kane joined the staff as a Development Officer in 2019, and accepted the dual roles of Director of Development for The Basilica and Executive Director of The Basilica Landmark in January 2021. The Landmark welcomed Mary McMahon as the board president on July 1, 2020 when Jim Jetland’s term ended. Both McMahon and Kane have profound experiences of finding peace and inspiration in both the beauty of our church building and in the warm embrace of The Basilica community.

“\nThe feeling of peace and joy still amazes me when I walk through the doors.\n”
— Mary McMahon

Mary McMahon was raised in Bloomington, where she and her identical twin were the oldest of six children. A graduate of the College of St. Benedict, she and her husband, Al Geiwitz, raised three children in Eden Prairie. Through the kids’ high school, Benilde-St. Margaret’s, they met friends that were Basilica members.

Her first time visiting The Basilica was at her oldest child’s confirmation; she recalls being “genuinely stunned” and knew this was going to be her “forever parish.” This experience resonates with so many who come to The Basilica.
“The feeling of peace and joy still amazes me when I walk through the doors,” McMahon recalls. “It’s a little embarrassing to admit how deep a love I have for our physical building. It’s the whole package: the structure, history, art, leadership, and, of course, the participants. Perhaps my awe with the building has to do with the peace and serenity I feel upon sitting in a pew and gazing around our stunning sanctuary. There is no other place that I feel so soothed.”

Throughout the pandemic, when attending Sunday Mass in person is challenging, McMahon enjoys the livestream Masses. “I’ve been surprised how rapt I am looking at my screen and listening to the choir, the lectors, and the priests. The livestream has also been a gift to my elderly parents who have been unable to get to Mass in person for several years. Adapting and creating such beautiful ways to livestream, communicate, and keep us all connected during this challenging year has been incredibly appreciated.”

Her affinity for our building and community makes her a perfect ambassador for The Basilica Landmark: the building of hope. “I’m so grateful to everyone who ensures our aging building is constantly tended to.” McMahon specifically acknowledges the master planning committee for their vision and plan to maintain and enhance the campus. “I am also excited for The Basilica Landmark to move forward and determine a strategy for church restoration and campus improvements as outlined in the master plan.”

**A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE**

Anne Kane joined The Basilica staff as a Development Officer in 2019 after spending nine years at Convent of the Visitation school in a variety of advancement roles. She grew up in Saint Paul and currently lives in Eagan, where she and her husband raised three children.

“I was always aware of and admired this beautiful historic church and strong faith community. But knowing The Basilica from a distance is not the same as being a member of this vibrant community. My admiration and commitment to The Basilica and The Basilica Landmark have grown as I have become more involved and invested in this incredible place,” she says.

“One of the remarkable features of The Basilica community is its positive and hopeful vision of the future,” Kane enthuses. “There is a true commitment to one another, the greater good, the broader community in which we live, and the unlimited possibilities that the future offers. I am honored to be a small part of shaping The Basilica’s future and ensuring that the long tradition of faith and service continues for generations to come.”

When she joined the staff, Kane participated in docent training to learn as much as possible about The Basilica’s architecture and rich history. “The church is a space that brings joy, peace, and calm through its soaring ceilings and incredible architecture. I love watching the light streaming through the beautiful stained glass windows as the sun moves throughout the day and how different spaces and features of the interior are highlighted as the light shifts from hour to hour.”

The parish community has been equally inspiring to Kane. “It has been so powerful to learn about the challenges each generation faced in their efforts to advance The Basilica of Saint Mary. It also offered me an important reminder that those who came before us are counting on this generation to be as dedicated in our work to sustain the buildings, campus, and community. It has been remarkable to be a part of an organization that has a tradition of service to others.”

Our vision for a future full of hope is more fitting than ever, during these challenging times. Kane is optimistic for the future of The Basilica of Saint Mary and The Basilica Landmark. “There is no doubt that this community will continue to thrive because of its dedicated and generous members,” she says.

**Melissa Streit is the Director of Engagement and has been an active volunteer and parish member since 1996.**

— Anne Kane

“There is no doubt that this community will continue to thrive....”
Love in the Time of COVID

Marriage ministry in pandemic

MOST engagements involve a little bit of stress as couples navigate wedding logistics, but for couples married in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic threw a huge wrench into their plans. Mara (née Stolee) and David “Dav” Cable were in the midst of planning a large wedding for August 2020 when the lockdowns went into place in Minnesota. The couple knew as early as April that their wedding was not likely to go forward as planned.

“We talked about it once, like very early on, when we didn’t even really know how real this thing was or wasn’t,” David said. “We were like, ‘Yeah, we’ll still get married. Why not?’ But what exactly that meant kept changing. It was like, ‘Are people going to be able to fly in? Is any of my family going to be able to be there?’ That was super hard.”

The wedding team at The Basilica has been navigating conversations like this with couples since March, 2020. Some couples have chosen to postpone indefinitely, while others have decided to hold smaller celebrations with a vow renewal and reception at a later date.

“We do a lot of weddings every year, and we are blessed to have couples dedicated to celebrating the sacrament, not just getting married,” said Travis Salisbury, Coordinator of Liturgical Celebrations. “Because of this, while tensions and anxieties were high, we were able to have real and solid conversations with our couples to help them discern what would be the best decision for them.”

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE IN A PANDEMIC

The pandemic has changed not just what the wedding day looks like but what all the preparation beforehand looks like, too. Marriage preparation at the Basilica includes a welcome meeting, completion of the Prepare/Enrich couples inventory and workshop, a retreat with former marriage ministry coordinator Nancy Keller and her husband Ron, and a wedding planning workshop with the liturgy team.

Ben Caduff, who coordinates marriage preparation for The Basilica, said that couples and workshop facilitators were very flexible in pivoting to virtual marriage preparation. “I think the benefit of remote meetings is that couples that are out of town because of work, school, etc. can participate much easier than before,” Ben said. “We have been able to adjust, and again most couples have been very patient and flexible with us.”

Mara and David were able to testify to how beneficial they found the Zoom versions of these marriage workshops. At the beginning of their engagement, David was living in San Francisco, which made it challenging to attend in-person workshops. The pandemic prompted him to move to Minneapolis to join Mara sooner, and the virtual workshops were easier to coordinate in the couple’s busy schedule.
“The pandemic made a lot of things harder for a lot of people, but for us, the pandemic is the reason we started living in the same part of the country,” David said. “It made everything about our lives way easier, because we were in the same place and could schedule things like marriage prep which before was a huge headache.”

WEDDING DAY SAFETY

Safety is a top priority for all liturgical celebrations at the Basilica, and weddings are no different. The liturgical team for weddings, which consists of Travis Salisbury, Megan Hume, and Janet Grove, made great efforts to create plans that keep all the guests and staff safe. The biggest changes, according to Janet, are mandatory mask wearing, a seating chart, and check-in for the wedding guests.

Mara, for one, loved the assigned seating. “Our guests had assigned seats, and it was really cute,” she said. “They were labeled with a giant Post-It note of your name on your seat, and it was just really well coordinated.”

Another obvious difference is the limit on how many guests a couple can invite to their wedding. The Basilica has limited the number of guests to ensure that social distancing can be maintained in the nave. Safety precautions, including guest list limits, are continuously revised to comply with the Minnesota Department of Health guidelines.

The Cables limited their guest list to about 30 people, which amounted to immediate family and their bridal party. What could have been seen as a downside was really a blessing, according to the couple. “Everyone talks about how your wedding is like a blur because you have so many people you have to talk to,” Mara said. “There wasn’t as much running around or stress involved because it was smaller.” “It was awesome. I’ve been recommending to everyone, like, this is the way we should do weddings,” David added. “We got to spend so much more time with the people who were most important to us than I think we would have at a typical wedding, where you kind of have to make the rounds to see everyone.”

The Basilica has begun offering live-streaming to give couples a way to include friends and family who aren’t able to attend in person. A recent wedding had over 13 countries represented on their live-stream, according to Travis. Full disclosure: Mara and Dav are friends of mine, and I attended their August nuptials via live-stream. My husband and I were so happy to have the opportunity to see our friends get married and toast them from afar, and we were both really impressed with how flawlessly everything was executed.

AFTER THE “I DO’S”

No matter how weddings are celebrated, the most important part is what comes after. One silver lining of the pandemic has been how much time couples—married, engaged or dating—have gotten to spend with one another.

“I think the pandemic has opened up a lot of opportunities for all couples, married and engaged, to take a good look at their relationship,” Ben said. “Couples are often spending much more time together than they might in our normal times of work, activities with children, etc. If a couple struggles with communication, this has given them a chance to work on those relationship building skills.”

For the Cables, this extra time together has been nothing short of a blessing, despite any challenges related to wedding planning. The couple plans on celebrating a vow renewal at The Basilica in August 2021 with all the friends and family who they had originally invited to their wedding. “Part of what I was so excited about for our wedding was sharing The Basilica with all of the people in our life who don’t know it and who are coming from far away. So even if we’re doing the modified renewal of vows next summer, we still needed to be at The Basilica,” Mara said. “People will enjoy our open bar, but I also want them to enjoy this sacred space and be a part of our marriage in that way, too.”

Rachel Newman Hogness is the editor of BASILICA magazine and a parishioner since 2017.
As we explore new ways to connect with and serve our parishioners and neighbors during the pandemic, I was curious how The Basilica had responded to the Influenza Epidemic of 1918, in a world without Zoom or livestreaming or even commercial radio.

The H1N1 influenza strain we know as the Spanish Flu initially came to the United States from Europe with our returning soldiers and nurses. The first cases in Minnesota were reported at Fort Snelling. The Minneapolis Morning Tribune reported on September 20, 1918, that there was “no Spanish Influenza in the city” though health commissioner Dr. H. M. Guildford expected this to change. Ten days later, on September 30, 150 cases were already reported in the city.

Was our rector at the Pro-Cathedral of Saint Mary Fr. Thomas Cullen alarmed? Apparently not.

In the announcements for Sunday, September 22, liturgies, classes and meetings continued as usual. The Red Cross ladies were requested to step up their efforts, and Fr. Cullen relayed concern that the school was falling short of its goals for War Bonds.

But case numbers continued to grow at an alarming rate, and at midnight on Saturday, October 12, an order by the city health department closed schools, churches, dance halls, pool halls, movie theaters—all public gathering spaces—to check the spread of the epidemic.

There was no announcements entry for Sunday, October 13. This is the only verified Sunday The Basilica has been closed completely for Mass in its history.

But that week, church leaders and members of the health and hospital committee of the city council met and agreed upon a modification of the closing order which may sound familiar:

• Not more than 25% capacity at each service
• Every alternate pew to be left vacant, with each pew occupied at half the usual capacity

Most of the large Protestant churches of the city opted to stay closed, calling instead for home worship. Fr. Cullen announced extra Masses would be held, and urged parishioners to attend the early Masses. Mass was held in the church at 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11AM, with Mass also in the “sub auditorium” (the unfinished church basement) at 9, 10 and 11AM.
In the announcements for Sunday, October 20, Fr. Cullen was clear:
“We recommend the strongest observance of the regulations suggested by the department of health — to resist the progress of the influenza epidemic.

1. Open windows
2. Cleanliness
3. Avoidance of crowds
4. Use of face masks when ministering to the sick.”

Parochial and public schools remained closed for five weeks. When they reopened November 18, extra doctors and nurses were deployed to the public schools to help monitor for the disease. The students had a vacation. Not so much the teachers.

“Virtually all the teachers who remained in the city have devoted their time to caring for the sick. They have gone into the homes in which it was impossible to get nurses and have worked under doctors’ orders and under their own initiative, in many instances serving as both nurse and cook,” the Minneapolis Morning Tribune reported.

The reopening of public life coincided with the end of the war, and Minneapolis citizens thronged the streets, churches, and auditoriums to celebrate the victory, all precautions tossed aside. The final toll, in just the last three months of 1918: 125,000 cases of influenza were reported in Minnesota, with 7,260 deaths, 2,000 in the city of Minneapolis.

For more information on the 1918 pandemic, I recommend the influenza-archives.org — a project of the University of Michigan, as well as an excellent article in MNopedia by Mary Laine.

Heather Craig is the archivist for The Basilica.
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