

**Centennial Moments in History**  
**1974–1978**  
No. 30  
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**The History of the Church of St. Michael & St. George (1928– )**  
**The Merged Parish Celebrates Its First 50 Years**

*Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.*

— Hebrews 12:1–2a

**T**he St. Michael School is an important part of our parish's ministry. The school began in February 1969 when Mrs. Joan Krause, the Director of Children's Education, and members of the St. Mary's Guild began operating a nursery school for three-year-olds three days a week with an initial enrollment of 11 children. A four-year-old class that met five days a week was added in the fall. The vestry gave the school a grant of \$2,500 (multiply all dollar figures in this e-letter by 3.8 to get an approximate present value, based on the CPI). The new school was an immediate success. It quickly became self-sufficient and repaid the grant. By 1978, the school had developed into one of the finest pre-schools in the area.

Beginning in 1981, one grade was added each year up to the sixth grade. The purpose of the school is to provide a Christian-oriented and challenging education program for the families of the parish and the surrounding community. In 1988 Mrs. Krause reported an enrollment of 175 students, saying, "We welcome all races and creeds. We have children of the Jewish and Greek Orthodox faiths as well as most others. Only about a fourth of our student body is Episcopalian."

In May 1976, the Rev. Jack E. Schweizer was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by Westminster College in Fulton, MO. The college had awarded the same degree to the Rev. J. Francis Sant 34 years earlier in May 1942. Shortly thereafter, it was discovered that Dr. Schweizer had a malignancy. He requested that the Rev. Joseph T. Swift, retired chaplain of St. Luke's Hospital, be asked to take charge of the parish during Dr. Schweizer's illness. When Dr. Schweizer died a year later on 17 March 1977, Mr. Swift was appointed interim rector.

The almost two-year interim coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Church of St. Michael & St. George that had been formed in 1928 with the merger of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels (founded 1912) and St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church (founded 1845). Many events and displays were offered for parishioners. The kick-off event was the opening on 7 September 1978 of the church's 1913 cornerstone located on a north side buttress near the east end. Workmen cut an opening on the cornerstone's south surface, exposing the copper box that had been placed in the cornerstone's cavity when the cornerstone was laid. The copper box had cemented itself in place, and its exposed end had to be opened with shears. Mr. Kenneth Moody reached into the box to extract its contents only to report, "It's soaking wet in here." Mr. Moody and Mr. Arthur Koelle, an architect, removed the box's soaked contents and drove that afternoon to the Hazel Corporation in Washington, MO that specialized in the restoration of old documents. They were counseled to place the wet contents in a deep freeze overnight and then to take them to

the Document Reclamation Service of McDonnell Aircraft. This service was able to process the newspapers so that they could be opened and read. However, the typed pages that contained a record of the founding of the parish could not be separated because the typing ink had acted as an adhesive, and the paper crumbled upon an attempt to separate the pages. The cornerstone contents remained on display in the Great Hall throughout the month of October.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parish Dinner was held at the Junior League of St. Louis on Saturday, 23 September 1978, the eve of the parish's Sunday celebration of the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels. A number of former clergy staff members attended, including the Rt. Rev. John E. Hines who had retired four years earlier as Presiding Bishop. The combined dinner program and take-home souvenir was a tabloid newspaper that had been compiled from historic news items about the parish by Mrs. Harriett Davidson, chairperson of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

On the following Sunday morning, the church celebrated the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels. The Rt. Rev. John H. Hines, retired Presiding Bishop and preacher for the day, and the Rt. Reverend William A. Jones, eighth bishop of the Diocese of Missouri, followed the choir into the church.

Cornerstone Sunday was one month later on 22 October 1978. The congregation assembled in the Great Hall and processed around the outside of the church to the opened cornerstone accompanied by a brass quintet from the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. Representatives of parish organizations placed items in a new copper box made by Mr. Kenneth Moody, and no doubt designed to be water-tight! Mr. Smith, the interim rector, deposited a new 1979 Prayer Book, having inscribed on the flyleaf his speculations as to the future of the new Prayer Book edition. At a later date, the copper box with its 1978 contributions was sealed and placed in the cornerstone by Mrs. Harriett Davidson and Mr. Kenneth Moody (pictured at the right) where it resides today.



As part of the celebration, a large needlepoint altar rug was designed by Mrs. Nancy Polk and worked on by a number of parishioners. It rests today in front of the High Altar and is a memorial to a young man of the parish who died young and bears his name: "Stephen McKee Lewis / 1958–1978 / Et Memoriam / Ad Gloriam Dei."

The church now awaited the calling of a rector to lead it into its next fifty years.



A new Prayer Book was introduced in 1979, replacing the 1928 edition that had been in use for half a century. If you worshiped with the 1928 Prayer Book for a portion of your life, how did you feel about the introduction of the new Prayer Book? How did you feel after worshiping with the new Prayer Book for a decade? If you felt differently after 10 years' experience with "the new," how can you use that experience as you look to the future that always brings change?

The Rev. Dr. J. Francis Sant had served as rector for a quarter of a century when he died. His successor, the Rev. Jack E. Schweizer, had served as rector for 14 years, and had been assistant rector during the preceding four years, when he died. Both men died unexpectedly. What can

parishioners do at such times to help the church appropriately process the tragedy and position itself during the interim for future ministry?

We celebrate or remember many events and anniversaries: birthdays, marriage dates, important dates in the nation's history, important dates in a church's history, et al. The church's liturgical calendar helps us remember systematically the events in the life of Jesus and the earliest church. What important dates and events do you celebrate? What value do you find in your celebrations?

How will our Centennial Celebration help point us to our future?

*Faith of our fathers! Living still  
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword:  
O how our hearts beat high with joy,  
When e'er we hear that glorious word:  
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!  
We will be true to thee till death.*

— John R. Tyler  
Historical information from *Trilogy* by Harriet Davidson