



## 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10.23)

### RESPONDING TO GOD’S LOVE: A HISTORY OF SERVING OTHERS

The mission statement of First Saint Paul’s—“Proclaiming Christ, Nurturing Faith, Serving Others”—concludes by stating our commitment to respond to the love of God in Christ by serving others, “both friends and strangers.” Our congregational ethos is deeply rooted in such acts of service, which continue to this day. Stella Wuerffel’s *City by the Sea* recounts how Pastor Wunder, in the late nineteenth century, walked the neighborhood in search of German immigrants new to Chicago. His first concern was often to bring them food or help them find employment—an initial step in engaging them in the spiritual life of the congregation.

Feeding the hungry has been at the heart of our community service since the formation of our Community Meals Program in 1983. Sponsored by a newly-formed Social Concerns Committee, the meals program began on a small scale, with rotating teams of members serving a hot meal each Saturday at noon. Numbers were small at first, but over the years the program grew to eventually serve 100 or more guests in the fellowship hall each Saturday. Non-church members eventually began serving on meals teams, coming from the neighborhood, from companies, or from school groups. When COVID shut down in-person meals, the church partnered with the Chicago Help Initiative to actually *expand* food distribution, preparing “to-go” meals for guests.



*FSP Community Meals and Chicago Help Initiative volunteers assembling bagged lunches last summer.*

Service to others has taken a number of other forms over the life of the congregation. In the 1960’s the congregation sponsored tutoring programs for children living in Cabrini-Green. In 1989 and 1990, members of the congregation participated in “Cabrini Alive,” sending volunteers to paint vacant apartments in Cabrini-Green to help get “wait-listed” applicants into housing. For many years the congregation supported Chicago Uptown Ministry; in the 1990’s this included hosting an annual Christmas party for the poor in the Uptown community. At times the church has assisted with refugee resettlement, sponsoring a young Vietnamese woman in 1981 and an Ethiopian family in 1990.



*Gamma Delta members escorting neighborhood children to Sunday School in the 1950s.*

During the late 1950's and early 1960's, one of the most active organizations at First Saint Paul's was the Epsilon chapter of Gamma Delta, an organization of young professionals and students. They participated in a number of service projects, including a Sunday morning program that went to neighborhood homes and apartments to escort children to Sunday school. This was a vital part of the church's attempt to reach out to a changing neighborhood.

In all of these ways—and many others—members of First Saint Paul's have committed themselves to living out the Gospel in lives of service to others.