



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

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

### **JOHN CHAVERIAT’S MEMORIES, PART TWO: OUR CHURCH BUILDINGS**

In the early 1920s, the City of Chicago began making efforts to widen LaSalle Street, starting in the loop, moving northward in sections, and eventually reaching Goethe Street and First Saint Paul’s in 1939. In order to widen the street, the City of Chicago filed a condemnation suit against the owners on both sides of LaSalle Street in order to take a portion of their property. The church’s main entrance faced LaSalle Street. As a result of the condemnation proceedings, the City of Chicago took a 14-foot wide strip of land running along LaSalle. Consequently, First Saint Paul’s had to eliminate the stairway at the front entrance of the church and move the front wall back 14 feet. That is why, today, the west side of our current building is situated up against the lot line without a setback.

As a result of the condemnation proceedings, First Saint Paul’s received a lump sum cash award. The voters’ assembly voted to accept the award and to use the proceeds to remodel the church building. The renovations included new lighting, a new altar, a new communion rail, a new pulpit, a side entrance for children, and a rear balcony for teenagers. In addition, to alleviate noise from the Sunday school, which met at the same time as the German service, a new entrance was constructed on the north side of the building. The original front stairway, eliminated to widen La Salle, was replaced with a pair of stairs that ran up either side of the front of the building. During funerals, it was very difficult maneuvering coffins up and down these circuitous stairs.

In the late 1920s the leaders of the congregation, anticipating the large cash payment that would come from the city as a result of the street-widening, decided to “go big.” Their plan was to erect an eight to ten story building on the site, with the church on the lower level while reserving the upper floors for housing for young women who were moving to the big city for jobs. In late September 1929, Rev. Henry Kowert sent the congregation a letter describing the plan and listing about twenty people who would be in charge of various aspects of the project. The funding drive set a goal of \$200,000, but in late October 1929 the stock market crashed and the Great Depression commenced. As a result, the building project died.

The current church building was constructed in 1969-1970. The building committee included Rev. James Manz, Richard Hoerger (Chairman), Paul Fahrenkrog, Gene Canning, John Chaveriat, and several others. The committee employed professors Peller and Tank of Valparaiso University to estimate the costs of remodeling. The cost was lower to build new than to remodel. Thus, FSP decided to demolish the old church and erect the current structure, at a cost of \$430,000. The committee had an extended debate about whether to include air conditioning in the new structure. They decided it was too expensive to install air conditioning. As an interesting note, the architectural firm

hired by the church (Loebl, Schlossman, Bennett & Dart) tried to convince the building committee to not include a kitchen in the new building, but the committee held firm in its plan to include a kitchen.

The old church building had been a synagogue, purchased from Temple Shalom in 1910. Thus, the cornerstone bears the date 1910. When the old church building was razed in 1969, the cantor from Temple Shalom came to First Saint Paul's to retrieve items from the Jewish cornerstone which had remained in the building. During construction of the new church building in 1969-70, the original cornerstone of First Saint Paul's was stored in the Chaveriat's garage. Today, that cornerstone is partially buried just inside the fence east of the main entrance to First Saint Paul's.

