Commitment to faith, love of God, love of neighbor

Members of St. Philomena Parish in Des Moines are called to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ “through our celebrating and praying together.” Parishioners also strive for this by support of the faith development of each other through compassionate service and care for one another and the world.

“We do this because of our commitment to our faith, our hope in the reign of God, and our love of God and neighbor,” according to the parish mission statement.

Established as a mission church in 1927 and a parish in 1952, St. Philomena Parish currently has 1,279 registered households. The pastor is Father Bryan Hersey.

St. Philomena School has 230 students—grades K-8. It was established in 1963. The principal is Sandra Smith. The school mission statement says in part that staffers look to “teach, model, and promote Gospel values in all areas of a balanced academic curriculum so that the teachings of Christ become our focus, and Christ Himself our constant point of reference.”

Father Hersey said that the parish seeks to help parishioners with their spiritual growth by “starting with the Eucharist and moving into the community.”

“We are a very Eucharistic-centered people,” Father Hersey noted in a telephone interview this week. He said staffers and volunteers who coordinate the parish ministries do so by being “compassionate and hospitable.”

The parish ministries include Widow/Widowers Support Group; Legion of Mary; St. Vincent de Paul Society; the Children’s Ministry; the Hispanic Ministry; the Mental Health Ministry; and the Outreach Eucharistic Ministry (for the homebound).

Here are some highlights of the parish history:

The first Mass ever celebrated in Des Moines was offered by the late Father John J. Daly in the Odd Fellows Hall (45 person capacity; Jan. 23, 1927). In March that year, a house at 9th Avenue and Vashon Street (now 222nd Street) was purchased and converted to a chapel. It was large enough for 100 people.

It was called the Des Moines Mission when first established in 1927. The following year, the Des Moines Mission received a gift of $1,000 from Miss Philomena Fitzpatrick in memory of her late father, Matthew Fitzpatrick—and the mission was renamed in honor of Miss Fitzpatrick’s patron saint, St. Philomena.

On Jan. 18, 1952, Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly elevated St. Philomena Mission to the status of canonical parish. The first pastor appointed after that was Father Joseph E. Orpen. In June 1954, ground was broken for construction of a new church. The first Mass in the new church was celebrated on March 27, 1955 – exactly 28 years after the first Mass was celebrated in the old church.

The Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of Notre Dame have taught children in religious instruction at St. Philomena School, which opened in September 1963 to nearly 200 children—staffed by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The school currently has 230 students and is run by lay staff.

February 25-26 St. Philomena participated in the new Progress P3 subscription program. Five dollars from each subscription they sold went to their youth group. For more information on this program contact Marketing Associate Keri Hake at 206-382-2075 or kerih@seattlearch.org