

# THE COMPANION

Companions of Christ Newsletter – Summer 2023



# New Chapter for the Companions

For diocesan priests, summer is often a season of anticipation and planning, as clergy shift between parishes, newly ordained priests and deacons report to their first assignments, and new programs and curricula are planned for the coming fall. For the Companions of Christ, this summer is especially exciting: This May we sold the Marshall House, our home and headquarters for the last 30 years. Thanks to an agreement with Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Saint Paul and the support of Archbishop Bernard Hebda, we are helping to remodel the Holy Spirit rectory and will relocate there for the next several years, at least.

The Companions purchased the house at 2137 Marshall Avenue in 1992 as a home for Companions priests and seminarians to grow in fraternity and learn to live in community with one another. Several of the original Companions helped to renovate and finish the space to include a chapel and additional bathroom facilities and bedrooms. We also worked with our neighbors and the city to ensure the area around us retained its single-family residential feel. Over the past three decades, the Marshall House has hosted countless meals and meetings and has echoed with laughter, song, and prayer. We will miss it.

On the other hand, the newly renovated rectory at Holy Spirit will accommodate as many as seven priests and seminarians at once, enabling us to better form our younger brothers and offer more space for full meetings of our growing fraternity—all while keeping us close to the Saint Paul Seminary and centrally located for our members.

In addition, we've sold the Marshall House to Saint Paul's Outreach (SPO), so it remains "in the Catholic family," so to speak. It will become a house for SPO missionaries, with a plaque commemorating the Companions' history with the property.

This transition would not be possible at all without the support of Archbishop Hebda and the trustees and parish community at Holy Spirit. Over the past few years, we have been discussing the possibility of having a Companions priest assigned as pastor of a parish with a rectory suited to this purpose. This year, when Father Nathan Hastings was assigned as pastor for the foreseeable future, the time seemed ripe to make a move. But it took time to bring everyone on board, and it is important to note that Holy Spirit is not a "Companions" parish in any sense. The Companions of Christ is not a religious order. We are guests in their space and will only be there as long as both the



Archbishop and the parish continue to support our presence. Of course, we pray this will be a long and fruitful partnership for everyone!

This issue of *The Companion* digs deeper into the history of the Marshall House and our move to Holy Spirit, as well as other news from our brother priests across the Archdiocese. Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support.

In Christ,  
**Father Peter Williams**  
Moderator

**Above: Father Peter Williams prays before a statue of our Blessed Mother at his parish, Saint Ambrose Catholic Community in Woodbury. Photo courtesy of Hilda Berdie Photography.**

**On the cover: Companions seminarian Joe Wappes, Father Chad VanHoose, and Father Sam Gilbertson in front of the chapel at Melk Abbey in Melk, Austria, in March 2023.**

# ANSWERED PRAYERS

## Renovated Rectory Provides New Formation House

In just his third year as a priest, at his first assignment as pastor, Father Nathan Hastings proposed a major undertaking: the renovation of the rectory at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Saint Paul, to provide living space for seven Companions of Christ priests and seminarians.

“The Companions had been thinking for quite a while about dispossessing ourselves of the Marshall House,” he says. “We’re diocesan priests—so while we’re forming men to be Companions and to live and pray together, the most authentic expression of Companions life is in a parish. If we could find a rectory close enough to the seminary to be our formation house, that would be a huge benefit!”

Father Hastings was assigned to Holy Spirit as parochial administrator in summer of 2022, and it wasn’t long before the Companions began looking in earnest at the large, old rectory as a possible new home.

“We quickly found out that the place had really good bones, but had not received any major updates since it was built in the 1950s,” says Father Hastings. “The basement had been the old parish offices, but those have been unused since the early 2000s. It was rough, but we could certainly make it work with some love and elbow grease.”



**Father Nathan Hastings**

The Companions approached the Archbishop, and with his blessing, began soliciting bids for the renovation—then Father Hastings presented the proposal to the parish and finance councils. After a couple of months of discussion and discernment, both voted unanimously in favor of an agreement with the Companions, and he presented his recommendation to the parish community:

*After consulting the trustees, the pastoral council, the finance council, and staff, I have discerned that this opportunity will truly benefit the Holy Spirit community spiritually and financially. The other Companions of Christ living in the rectory will not have a formal role in the parish and will have fulltime obligations outside of our parish. I will continue as pastor of Holy Spirit with my focus on shepherding and serving our parish. It is my hope as you come to know these holy men with time, and they come to know our wonderful parish, that we discover possible ways in which we can connect with each other.* – excerpt from Father Hastings’s letter to the parish

The Companions funded the renovations, enabling the parish to focus its resources on more pressing needs while preserving and improving a significant parish facility. The parish retains ownership of the rectory—and while the intent is a long-term relationship between Holy Spirit and the Companions, nothing is guaranteed beyond Father Hastings’s assignment as pastor.

Work on the rectory began in January and is expected to be completed this summer. On the upper level, two tiny restrooms and a shared shower were converted into two modern bathrooms; an additional suite-style bathroom



**Contractors demolish the rectory kitchen at Holy Spirit to make it more suitable for group use.**

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# FORMATIVE YEARS

## The Companions Came of Age in the Marshall House

Before they became diocesan priests, the Companions were a group of young Catholic men pursuing holiness in community. In 1990, Bishop Robert Carlson encouraged them to consider priesthood in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and helped with the initial draft of their statutes. Shortly thereafter, the Companions moved into the bishop's former residence on the campus of the University of St. Thomas—on-campus housing in close proximity to the Saint Paul Seminary, enabling them to continue to live in community while they pursued graduate studies.



Father Tom Margevičius

According to Father Tom Margevičius, when the university decided to pursue other plans for the house a couple of years later, Bishop Carlson again took the Companions under his wing.

"Bishop Carlson said, 'Alright, let's start looking for a house for you,'" Father Margevičius recalls. "We had already gotten approval from Archbishop [John] Roach that we could participate in seminary events,

meetings, and social activities, then commute to our house in the evening. We wanted to find something within a mile of the University of St. Thomas. We looked at a couple places that didn't work so well and then found one on Marshall Avenue. It was listed in the newspaper, but there was no For Sale sign. I knocked on the door and asked the owner, 'Is this house for sale?' He said they were going to list it, but he didn't think it was official yet. 'Well,' I said, 'it's officially in the paper, and we're interested!'"

### A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Both the neighbors and the city were concerned that selling the house to the Companions could turn the street into "frat row." The neighborhood is zoned single-family, and per the City of Saint Paul's rules, no more than four adults are allowed to reside in a single-family residence. The Companions hoped to have six to eight seminarians and priests living there.

"We told the seller, 'If you want to sell the house, we want to buy it. It's our problem to figure out how to convince the city to allow our members to live there,'" says Father Margevičius. "We gave them what they were asking, and within a week it was a done deal."

Archbishop Roach, Bishop Carlson, and others helped connect the Companions with people who could help them get a mortgage at a good rate, and they pooled their resources to make the purchase. They found the house in summer of 1992 but couldn't move in until November 1. Bishop Carlson again stepped up to find a nearby parish with rectory space to accommodate them.

Once they moved in, renovations began. They did what work they could themselves, and hired family, friends, and contractors to take on the rest.

"When we bought it, we left the first floor and the second floor, with four bedrooms and the bathroom, pretty much intact," Father Margevičius says. "The entire attic, however, was just joists and rafters, and the basement was unfinished—just the boiler, the water heater, the laundry tub,

## "How Lovely is Your Dwelling Place O Lord God of Hosts" - Psalm 84

Two years ago we began to seriously consider a major project — that of building a permanent chapel and sacristy in our home on Marshall Ave. The project would involve serious renovation of existing space being used for a bedroom, office and storage. It would involve moving the laundry room, and replacing an uneven cement floor. It would also involve countless hours working with an architect, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and bricklayers. The workmanship and materials have an enduring quality. As you can see from these photos we are nearing the end of the project...and it is beautiful! It speaks of a noble simplicity. It is place of peace, a place to return to the Lord the praise, honor and glory due His name.

Many people have assisted us in this process through their generous gifts. A capital campaign initiated in October is two thirds the way toward its goal. Designated gifts have helped to furnish the chapel with vessels and vestments, altar and ambo, benches and works of art. Thank you to all who have contributed in any way to make this new chapel possible. Your kindness will long be remembered.



and a toilet that was not even enclosed. The yard needed work, too. Over the course of several years, we finished off the basement, redoing half of it to make a proper chapel, and adding bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. I think we've shown ourselves to the neighborhood to be good stewards of the property."

**LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER**

In addition to hosting meals and meetings for all the Companions, the house helps to form future Companions priests. The Companions of Christ specifically commit to living in community as much as possible—and living together isn't always easy.

"The difference between two priests who happen to be assigned to the same rectory and two Companions living together is that if two non-Companions priests don't get along, they are only going to be together until one of them gets reassigned," Father Margevičius says. "And if it gets really bad, they can appeal to the Archbishop to be moved sooner or find separate housing. But as Companions, living together is an expression of the communal call we believe God has given us and the obedience call to which we adhere. We don't choose our living situations; we let God, through the Archbishop, decide. If that's the case, we have to develop the skills to live well together."

Formation at the Marshall House included personal habits, care, and cleanliness; basic life skills like cooking and laundry; and responsibility and accountability.

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# THE Companion

Fall 1992

Newsletter of the Companions of Christ, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

## Welcome!

We hope you enjoy the first issue of *The Companion*, the new Companions of Christ Newsletter. Many of you have been long-time supporters and friends of the Companions. Thank you for your continued support. Others are receiving the *Companions Newsletter* for the first time. We welcome you and want you to know how much we appreciate your interest.

The purpose of *The Companion* is to inform friends, family and supporters of the Companions of Christ about what is happening in our life and how you can continue to support us as we pursue God's call to holiness, service and priesthood in His Church. We strongly believe that God has raised up the Companions of Christ to help fill the Church's need for holy-priests.

## Our New Home



Companions of Christ purchased this home in October; we moved in on November 1.

## Called to be 'Companions'

The Companions of Christ became a Public Association of Christian Faithful in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis this past year. On the road to Emmaus our Lord is made known to us "in the breaking of the bread."

## Group of 'companions' to study for priesthood here

### Charismatic-based community is entering St. Paul Seminary

Catholic Bulletin

They're not really members of a religious order, but they live in community.

Their goal is to become diocesan priests. But unlike diocesan priests, they still will live in community after ordination.

This unique group is called the Companions of Christ (the church's official term for a group like this is "association of the faithful"). Four of their members are now studying at the St. Paul Seminary to become priests for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

"The idea of diocesan priests belonging to a community sharing a common life dates back many centuries, though it is not as



Bishop Robert Carlson, third from left, is serving as archdiocesan liaison with the Companions of Christ, a community of men who are studying for the diocesan priesthood. Pictured are, from left, William Pelant, Jeff Huard, Bishop Carlson, Kevin Finnegan, Tom Margevičius, Bill Baer and Drew Cozzens.

Paul and have continued to work primarily in evangelization. The newly ordained, with the exception of those who have completed the courses needed for eventual entrance to the seminary, Bishop

# MARSHALL HOUSE MEMORIES

"I remember after the basement of the house was finished with new carpet and drywall, there was a major summer rainstorm. We didn't realize there was no waterproofing or drainage tile sunk in around the foundation. It was like someone had a hose—water was pouring into the basement! I was a newly ordained priest at Nativity of Our Lord in Saint Paul. I did the evening Mass on Saturday, then I was up almost the entire night, bailing water again and again, storm after storm. I had the 7:00 AM Mass on Sunday, and I was filthy, sweaty, and exhausted. I got up there to preach my homily, and I just started to cry. I was an emotional basket-case that morning!" – **Father Tom Margevičius**

"The Marshall House was a great setting for many years. It has a beautiful chapel, and prayer was a great highlight. I also have fond memories of sitting on our patio or having fellowship with a fire going in our fireplace." – **Father Jeffrey Huard**

"One day Bishop Paul Dudley came for supper. We all enjoyed an elevated conversation about Jesus, the Church, and grace for ministry. He is a joyful and prayerful man. At the end of the meal, we all stood up giving thanks to God for the delicious food and those who prepared it, at which point we asked the good bishop if he would offer us his blessing. In that very moment he knelt down on the wooden floor and said, 'I would like to ask you for your blessing.' That witness of humility we will never forget." – **Father Michael Becker**



# The Companions of Christ

DIOCESAN PRIESTS LIVING IN FRATERNITY

## CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOGO

We are excited to unveil our new brandmark and wordmark! This logo has the same colors and style as the crest for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, including the waves of the Mississippi River, locating the Companions within this local church. The symbols of the chalice and sacred host represent our priestly identity—even the English word “companion” is derived from the Latin prefix *com-* (“with”) and *panis* (bread). The flame represents the fire of the Holy Spirit and our life in the Spirit through the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

The symbols of the flame and the Eucharist also harken to a key Scripture passage in the life of our community: the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35. This story of two companions walking with Jesus, discussing the scriptures in the light of the mystery of Christ and breaking bread together provides the model for our community.

Finally, the phrase “Diocesan Priests Living in Fraternity” has been a long-standing descriptor and mission statement of sorts for our community for many years. Special thanks to graphic designer Shelley Korteum for her great work developing our ideas into a compelling new logo.



## The Companions of Christ

DIOCESAN PRIESTS LIVING IN FRATERNITY

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“Putting seminarians in a household for human formation is essential,” says Father Margevičius. “You’re not just getting the intellectual vision, the spiritual or the theological rationale for the Companions. Seminary will give you theology, but if you’re grumpy and slovenly and don’t know how to greet someone cordially in the morning—those kinds of skills are required in order to get along well together in a household.”

Appropriately, the new residents of 2137 Marshall Avenue will also be young Catholics, working as missionaries with Saint Paul’s Outreach and pursuing holiness in community with each other. Meanwhile, a new crop of Companions seminarians will be learning to live well together at the renovated rectory at Holy Spirit Catholic Church beginning this fall. While the Holy Spirit community is not a “Companions parish,” the hope is that it will be their home for years to come.

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

was made accessible from outside the bedroom from common use; carpet was removed, and hardwood floors beneath were refinished; and laundry facilities and central air conditioning were added. In addition, an existing room has been converted into a chapel.

On the main floor, two interior walls were removed to open up the kitchen and dining area for seven to eight people to gather comfortably. The kitchen itself was modernized, and a doorway was created to give access from the dining area to a large deck on the garage roof. Finally, the lower-level offices were converted into two bedrooms with a shared bathroom and a library/study area for the seminarians staying there. The Companions also modernized the HVAC system on the lower level and connected to the church boiler for heating.

“When our whole Companions community meets, we have a very nice hall underneath the church—we can pray our Holy Hour together in the church, then go downstairs and use the hall for dinner,” says Father Hastings. “Our plan is to have three priests living there, including myself, with room for up to four seminarians at a time and a guest room available. Two of the priests have roles at the seminary, so they will be familiar with the seminarians and their schedule, which will be great for formation at the house. Of course, I will be there too, as a pastor, providing visibility into life as a parish priest. Our hope is that this relationship between the Companions and Holy Spirit will benefit everyone involved!”



# BROTHERS IN UNITY



## APPOINTMENTS

**FATHER SAM GILBERTSON**  
Parochial Vicar, Church of Saint Ambrose (Woodbury)

**FATHER NATHAN HASTINGS**  
Pastor, Church of the Holy Spirit (Saint Paul)

**FATHER JOSEPH KUHARSKI**  
Spiritual Director and Adjunct Instructor, Saint Paul Seminary (Saint Paul)

**FATHER LUKE MARQUARD**  
Pastor, Church of Saint Joseph (West Saint Paul)

**FATHER MARCUS MILLESS**  
Pastor, Church of Saint Helena (Minneapolis)

**FATHER JOSEPH ZABINSKI**  
Pastor, Church of Saint Albert (Albertville)



Top left: Father Marc Paveglio, Father Michael Barsness, Father Joe Kuharski, Father Marcus Milless, Father Jake Anderson, and Father Timothy Lange of the Diocese of Duluth gather for Mass during a skiing trip to Colorado in January 2023. Top right: Father Evan Koop greets his parents, Deacon Steve and Debbie Koop, following completion of his doctoral studies in Rome. Bottom: Father Connor McGinnis and Father Brian Park (center) celebrate Mass with Archbishop Bernard Hebda at the newly decorated and expanded St. Michael Catholic Church in St. Michael.



# The Companions of Christ

DIOCESAN PRIESTS LIVING IN FRATERNITY

PO Box 16239

SAINT PAUL, MN 55116

We moved!  
Please update  
our address to  
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## PRAY FOR VOCATIONS

Three seminarians discerning the Companions of Christ were ordained transitional deacons this spring. Please pray for more vocations to priesthood, diaconate, and religious life for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis—and for all priests and seminarians discerning the Companions of Christ. God bless you!

