

A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR PARISHES AND SCHOOL

On June 13, 1963, Archbishop Bergan officially established St. James Parish. The Archdiocese purchased a site for the new parish in November, 1961, at 90th and Tomahawk Blvd. on one half acre of land.

The founding pastor, Fr. Jerome Dickes, arrived in Omaha in June, 1963, from Butte, Nebraska. Fr. Dickes bought a home at 9130 Tomahawk Blvd. At first, St. James parishioners attended Mass at Boyd School. The plans for the new parish consisted of a 16 room school, temporary church, and multi-purpose room. St. James School opened in September, 1965, with 526 pupils in Grades One through Eight. The parish welcomed Sr. Ruth Arnott as the first principal, 3 other Servants of Mary, and eleven lay teachers. The sisters moved into their convent in November, 1965, at 9124 Tomahawk Blvd. In September, 1966, ten rooms were added to the school.

A new principal, Sr. Alice Kotwick, OSM, came in 1971. In 1972 St. James built a new rectory located at 9025 Larimore. The original rectory at 9130 Tomahawk Blvd. was converted to parish office space. Fr. Robert Eimers succeeded Fr. Dickes as pastor of St. James in January, 1976, and stayed until January, 1980. Fr. Wm. Fitzgerald served as pastor from 1980 until 1987, and in June of 1987, the parish welcomed Fr. Richard Swolek. In June, 1991, Fr. Kenneth Potts replaced Fr. Swolek as pastor.

On June 17, 1981, St. James Parish gave birth to a new parish, St. Elizabeth Ann. Fr. Thomas McDermott was named founding pastor and with the help of his parishioners established residence at 11212 Grande Ave. Sunday Masses were held at Sunnyslope School until May, 1984, when St. Elizabeth Ann Church opened its doors. Fr. Tony Petrusic succeeded Fr. McDermott, and served the parish from 1988 until January, 1991, at which time Fr. Tony Tresnak became pastor. The school was renamed St. James/Seton in 1981 and Sr. M. Suzanne Vandenheede, OSM, became principal.

In 1986 the two parishes initiated a Development Program in order to ensure financial support for St. James/Seton School in years to come. Sr. Jackie Thorn, OSM, was principal during the 1987-88 school year. St. James Parish and St. James/Seton School saw expansion during the year with the completion of a parish center with an upper shell to be used for future school expansion. The school continued to prosper under the capable leadership of its succeeding principals. Mr. Russell E. Finken served as principal of St. James/Seton during the 1988-89 school year, followed by Dr. Jerry Ryan (1989-1991) and Dr. Barbara Brock (1991-1994). Mr. Kirk Estee joined St. James/Seton School as principal in the fall of 1994 and remained as principal through the 1996-97 school year. In August of 1997, the school year resumed under the leadership of Mr. Terry L. Crum until September 2011 when Mrs. Chris Arnold assumed the principal ship, serving until May of 2016. Mr. William Kelly is the current principal at SJS.

In September of 1993, St. James/Seton realized an expansion with completed classrooms above the St. James Parish Center. The Junior High relocated to these classrooms, allowing for expansion of the media center and computer lab and creating space for Kindergarten classrooms. Kindergarten became a reality in the fall of 1994.

In December of 2003 under the leadership of Father Michael Grewe, St. James Parish built a new church. The former church space was given to the school. A “Faith First” campaign in conjunction with St James and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, under the leadership of Father Joseph Hanefeldt, was initiated to raise funds to implement building changes in the school structure including the former church space.

In August, 2004, the “old” church space officially became a new Media Center, second technology lab, and a number of office spaces. In June of 2005, Father Richard Reiser became the pastor of St. James. In June of 2007 Father Frank Dvorak became pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish. Today Father Tom Weisbecker is the pastor of St. James Parish and Father Frank Baumert is the Pastoral Administrator at St. Elizabeth Ann Parish.