



**History of St. George
School
Founded in 1883**

History of St. George School

St. George School has a long and rich history. Four nuns of the School Sisters of Notre Dame opened a two-room school, in the Convent (which the Sisters lived), on September 10, 1883. They had very unusual names: Sister Charissima was the superior (which means she was "in charge") and teacher of the upper classroom; Sister Desideria was the music teacher and teacher of the other classroom. Sister Lellis was the needlework teacher, while Sister Balbina was the house sister (which means she was the cook and did the housework.) Their combined salary, back in 1883, was \$500 per year – or about \$42 per month for all four of them. That would mean that each one of them made approximately \$10.50 per month! The parish and some from tuition paid part of their salaries, but most of the money they received they earned by giving music lessons after school and selling their needlework.

During the first ten years of the school, the future of the school was quite uncertain. In 1886, there were 48 students enrolled in St. George School, but the following year there were only 20 students enrolled. By 1891, the enrollment had climbed to 31 students. The students during that first decade did not have many of the classroom materials and supplies they needed. It took them five years before they got a blackboard, benches, and a globe. To help raise money for the school, the Sisters put on school entertainments and took in boarders. The Sisters would provide meals for them, and they even housed the pastor and charged \$18.00 each month.

Another big problem in the early years of the school was the frequent change in pastors. During the first 15 years, four different pastors were named – three of whom died or had serious illnesses, which forced them to leave unexpectedly. The students, and the Sisters, as well, were significantly affected by many diseases during that time. In 1894, measles and whooping cough were the significant illnesses, but the following year, in 1895, Diphtheria and typhoid fever were the problems. In 1904, the school had to close for a while because so many students had measles.

On the brighter side, a new Sister arrived in 1903 to teach. Sister Regina Mackel arrived to teach the primary grades. Sister Regina proved to be a wonderful gift to St. George School as she moved from primary teacher to intermediate grades and finally to the upper grades. She became the principal in 1908 – about the same time that Father Henry Muckerman became the pastor. These two leaders of the Church and School brought many, many developments and improvements. The school began to prosper and grow! In 1908, the first five students received their 8th-grade certificate – which means they "graduated" from St. George Grammar School. That was quite an accomplishment for both the students and the

school! By 1922, ten or more students were graduating each year. Enrollment of the school jumped from 80 students in 1904 to over 130 students in 1916.

Father Muckerman had a great interest in the school and worked to keep it at the front of the parish interests. Shortly after he arrived in 1907, he renovated the Convent to create larger classrooms. By 1909, he got the parish to build the first school building separate from the Convent. You will note the cornerstone of what we call the Jr. High Building says – St. George School, Rev. H. J. M. (for Fr. Muckerman) with the date of 1909. One hundred fifty students occupied the new school on January 17, 1911. Fr. Muckerman had such an interest in the school that he often gave gifts like a sizeable standard dictionary or a set of history books. He also directed the school's drama club himself. During the prosperous years with Sr. Regina and Fr. Muckerman, the school students made quite a name for themselves in county competitions. The St. George School float and the school work exhibit won first place at the Osage County Fair in 1923. Fr. Muckerman was so proud of the students that he rewarded them with a trip to Jefferson City!

In 1925, Father Muckerman became ill and had to resign, and Sr. Regina was transferred. But, two new leaders, Father Fischer and Sister Ulfrida, continued to keep the school strong. In the early 1930s, it is noted that the students took a big part in the liturgy. The children would say the prayers at the foot of the altar in English and sing Gregorian chants. The children brought their own hosts to the altar on their solemn and first Communion. They participated in the parish celebrations and the special liturgies by reading, singing, and performing special programs and plays.

During the '30s, the school felt financial problems just as our country was going through the Great Depression. The widespread number of contagious diseases and the death of one student from scarlet fever brought on the county nurse, doctor, and dentist's medical services. The school was fumigated, and medical exams were given to all the children. Many of the students were found to be malnourished – underweight, and unhealthy. A program to provide a hot lunch for the students at school was introduced. The lunch was hot soup and cocoa. Children either brought food donations (like vegetables or meat from their homes) or paid two cents a day for their lunch. This program only lasted a couple of years – and then the students returned to bringing their lunch every day. During this same time, one of the school's greatest tragedies happened when one young student was struck and killed in front of the school by a coal truck as he and his older brother were walking to school.

In the late 1930s, St. George School joined with most other rural Catholic schools and became a parochial "public" school. This seemed to be a good situation for both St. George

and the public school district. St. George School would receive free textbooks, teachers' salaries, and other financial instructional assistance. They couldn't have more than two grades in each room, so an additional teacher had to be hired. Schedules and calendar events had to be coordinated with the public school. The Sisters attended the public school teacher meetings. A good relationship existed between the Sisters and the public school administration for many years. During this time, it is reported that when the principal, Sister Anthusa, died, the Superintendent of the public school, Mr. Reed, let the Sisters borrow his car for the funeral procession to the motherhouse in St. Louis. He gave the other Sisters the day off to attend the funeral.

During World War II, teachers and students at St. George joined other Americans in supporting the war effort. They collected tons of scrap iron, rubber, and aluminum. Even the aluminum foil from gum wrappers was peeled off and saved. There were some class contests to see who could collect the most scrap iron would receive a prize of \$1.50

After being a public, parochial school for 12 years, conflicts between the schools arose, and the decision to return to a Catholic parish school was made. This created quite a financial burden as the parish now had to pay the teachers' salaries and purchase their textbooks and supplies. Additionally, it was ruled unconstitutional for the public school to provide transportation for the Catholic school students, so the parish purchased two school buses. These setbacks didn't stop the growth and progress of the school, however. In 1954, when the school enrollment rose to 200, Father Timpe convinced the parish to build a new school. The cornerstone of the elementary building was laid in January of 1955.

The first lay teachers, which means they weren't Sisters, were hired in 1947 & 1948. By 1968, St. George School had five Sisters and two lay teachers, but ten years later, the reverse was true – there were only two full-time Sisters and six full-time lay teachers. The Archdiocese in St. Louis noted the growth and progress of the school, and St. George School became a "demonstration" school for the diocese. This meant that the teachers here were instructed in new teaching methods and other Catholic schools in the area came to observe and learn from the teachers here. It was quite a compliment to be chosen as a "demonstration" school. It generated a great deal of pride and enthusiasm for the school.

During the late '60s, St. George School was known for its excellence in art, music, and writing. Murals, mosaics, paintings, and drawings were often on display. Music festivals and programs and art exhibits were frequent. School enrollment topped 290 students, and the old school building was repaired and used again. During the '70s, one school carnival – a fund-raiser – was said to have brought in \$1200. The Speech League was started, and many St. George students excelled in public speaking. The St. George basketball team was formed and officially named "The Warriors."

Also, in the '70s, under Father Schmitz's leadership, the need for a new and larger Church was addressed. The last Mass celebrated in the old Church was in July of 1974, and the 80-year-old building was demolished. In April 1975, the old Church's cornerstone was recut and laid for the new Church – the Church we have today.

Beginning with the late '70s, Sister Mary Ann Huesling became the principal of our school. She was followed as a principal by Rev. Thomas Coleti, a former deacon at St. George parish. Sr. Rose Francis Brockmeyer served as the principal from 1986 – 1992. At that time, Mrs. Burns, who had been the 8th-grade teacher and assistant principal for one year, was asked to take the principal position. She became the first lay-principal (which means the first principal who had not been a Sister or a Deacon) of St. George School. Our last full-time Sister on staff at the school was Sister Judith Ann Kleinheider, the 7th-grade homeroom teacher and taught Math to grades 5 – 8.

In 1992, we added a ½ day Kindergarten program with Extended-Care available in the afternoon. A few years later, Kindergarten was increased to an all-day program with Extended-Care available after school. A Preschool program was added with 25 students enrolled in the 3 and 4-year-old Preschool program.

The physical facilities were expanded with the addition of the St. George Activity Center in 1996. This expansion allowed for the library and administrative offices and also provided a health room and conference room. A beautiful gymnasium and lobby area for athletic, parish, and community events has been a tremendous asset to our school. The Extended-Care program has a spacious and well-equipped facility for before and after school care. A summer care program is also available.

In July 2003, Rev. I. C. Medina became pastor of St. George. He was a strong supporter of St. George School and worked hard to help it continue to be successful. In 2007, Sister Celly Ann Amparano, a School Sister of Notre Dame, became our principal, joining Sister Linda Brandt, serving as a full-time teacher. In 2011, Sister Claret Feldhake joined the faculty as a part-time art teacher. In July 2012, Rev. John Schmitz became the pastor of St. George.

The school has continued to be progressive and innovative with quality, dedicated teachers and involved and committed parents. In 2008, Spanish was added to the curriculum for junior high students. In 2010, the band program was expanded; however, with no music teacher on staff for 2012-13, it was temporarily suspended. In 2011, a part-time art teacher was added to enhance the fine arts program. The school continues to incorporate the best of new technology tools to improve student learning. The school has six SMART Boards

(interactive whiteboards), and teachers are finding many new ways to engage students in learning actively.

For the 2014-2015 school year, Mrs. Lisa Grellner was hired as the second lay principal. Father Dan Merz became the pastor of St. George. The school acquired iPads to help teachers individualize instruction and support the school to grow in the technology world.

In the 2015-2016 school year, a full-day preschool was added to the curriculum for four-year-olds. This was a kindergarten readiness program very successful and helped to raise the enrollment for the school. This kindergarten readiness program was under the direction of Ms. Mary Reichart. The preschool program came under the direction of Jessica Jurd, when Ms. Reichart moved to another school.

In the school year 2016-2017, the junior high was moved from the Notre Dame building. All students were housed under one roof. During the summer months before the start of school, the entire old asbestos tile was removed, and new flooring was poured. Due to generous donations of some of our parishioners, four new classrooms were added under the gym. This allowed for all grades to be housed under one roof.

During 2017-2018 The Church began a yearlong renovation process. The parish started a capital campaign. Our estimated goal was to raise \$500,000 to accomplish many projects, update facilities, and prepare them for the future. Projects in the capital campaign also included a new roof for the Church, cleaning and sealing the brick on the Church, asbestos removal in the floor at school, interior renovation of the Church, energy efficiency, and renewable solar power installation. These combined projects have accomplished so much for our campus and set the stage for future energy to be much more efficient and cost-effective. During this process, Mass was held in the gym for several months. The Church was dedicated on June 17, 2018.

The 2019-2020 school year started usually. However, as the year progressed, the world was experiencing a new virus that originated in China. COVID-19 began to spread across the whole world. This pandemic interfered with our lives in drastic ways. On March 18, 2020, St. George School was shut down, and all public Masses were canceled. Students had to learn virtually and through the use of packets. Parents had to partner with teachers to ensure that learning continued. Attendance to public Masses didn't happen until later that summer, and even then, there was limited attendance.

In June of 2020, Father Colin Franklin became the pastor of St. George Parish. This was his first assignment with a school. Fr. Franklin then had to assist with the reopening of schools with the COVID restrictions. The opening of school in August required extensive planning and preparation. Students were expected to stay in specific groups and wear masks when they were not in the classrooms. Students from second to eighth grade were

provided Chromebooks and were trained in virtual classrooms just in case we had to shut down again. This new technology allowed teachers to access online resources better than ever before. Teachers were expected to keep students learning during these trying times. Teachers continued to teach virtually and in-person throughout this year. Often, a child or family or partial class were placed in quarantine for the safety of their peers, teachers maintained a quality, Catholic education even during this time.

Following the world wide pandemic in 2021, St. George School reopened with restrictions for the continuation of safety for all. As this school year progressed we were able to lessen the restrictions and were able to focus on learning and filling in any educational gaps that might have occurred with the shut down. The faith of the school remained strong and students continued to thrive.

2022-2023 school year opened with 180 students. This was the first year since the pandemic that we didn't see the regulations that were enforced since COVID started. During the summer prior to the start of school, many classrooms were switched to increase efficiency and flow of the school year. As the world continued to see more and more school shootings, St. George changed some interior for added safety measures for the students. We had some wonderful donors that purchased for the memory of the following: Alphons and Florence Dudenhoeffer, John and Corilla Samson, American Family Insurance, Legends Bank, Catholic Knights of Columbus, and Ken and Judy Holzemn.

The school is blessed to have a supportive parish to ensure its continued success. It is vital in focusing on its mission: "We are Christ-centered and faith-directed in all that we are." The school is rooted in a strong faith-filled past and looks forward to a strong faith-filled future.