

GoFundMe set up

1 SACRED HEART

to let the community know that the fire “was not connected in any way to George Floyd/ Derek Chauvin or protestors.” Whatever the outcome of the fire investigation, she wanted to communicate to all that “holding hate in your heart will never bring our church back and we would like to rally to build our community together.”

Miraculously, items were salvaged from the church. Parishioners and neighbors were there to help with recovery. The altar, pews, some figures and the stations of the cross were saved. Other statues and stained glass will need repair and with funding, they can be rescued. All the church vestments were destroyed except incredibly - the vestment that Father Kutek wore when he was first ordained a priest back in Poland. That garment was spared and suffered no damage.

Sacred Heart of Jesus is part of the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC). The PNCC was founded in 1897 in Scranton, Penn., over theological differences with the Roman Catholic Church. A few of the differences: The PNCC is not under jurisdiction of the Pope or Vatican and is set up in a democratic fashion locally. The PNCC also allows priests to marry and have a family. In 1991, Father Kutek immigrated from Poland and since 1993 he has been dedicated in serving as the pastor. He and his wife and children have felt the church

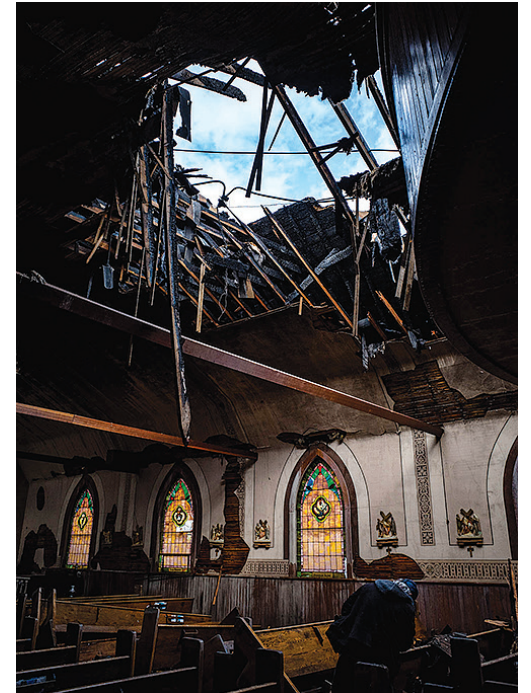
was a great part of the family dynamic and call it home.

Looking forward from this disaster, Fr. Kutek stated, “The church will rise out of the ashes and although this is devastating to the church, as Christians and Catholics we want to move forward in peace.” Sunday morning Holy Mass is now being held at 10:00 a.m. at Pulaski Auditorium (2114 5th St NE), the parish hall located across the street from the church. Most of the parishioners and their families have been attending this parish for generations. Counseling is available after the Sunday service for any parishioner who needs help dealing with the loss.

COVID-19 had already impacted the parish financially and the fire added considerably to that burden. Father Kutek is “waiting for a light from above and guidance from God” on what the future holds for the parish. One can never fully understand the damage a fire can do to a parish and any donations to help the church to go forward would be appreciated. Checks can be sent to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church at 420 22nd Ave. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418. A GoFundme account has been set up at gofundme.com/f/help-sacred-heart-rebuild-our-church.

Fire damaged the bell tower, and the roof gave way. Efforts are underway to salvage whatever is possible.

(Photos by Mike Madison)



57 volunteers bag 362 lbs. of litter



Earth Watch

On April 24, volunteers from Columbia Heights were joined by residents from Lino Lakes and Roseville who wanted to do their part to protect the earth. Families used the event to teach their kids about preventing pollution and the need to protect earth’s resources. The event was organized by HeightsNEXT.

Elected officials rolled up their sleeves, too. Columbia Heights Mayor Amada Marquez Simula was joined by U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, state Rep. Sandra Feist and state Sen. Mary Kunesh-Podein.

The Columbia Heights Dairy Queen partnered with HeightsNEXT to provide

volunteers with a coupon for a free Dilly Bar. Other businesses along Central Avenue were also invited to join in the Earth Day Cleanup by clearing their properties of trash or debris that may have accumulated there.

The City of Columbia Heights provided cleanup supplies and assistance to support volunteers’ work. Cleanups like this supplement the city’s ongoing efforts to reduce litter and prevent pollution.

According to Connie Buesgens, HeightsNEXT president, “Participants’ actions stopped trash from accumulating at storm drains and potentially causing localized flooding. They also kept these pollutants from entering storm drains and flowing through pipes under the street into the Mississippi River where they harm wildlife and make treatment of our tap water more difficult.”

Celebrating a job well done, volunteers posed for their traditional photo, outside the Columbia Heights Public Library. Four elected officials joined in the effort to pick up litter on Saturday, April 24.

(Photo and article courtesy of HeightsNEXT)

Cigarette butts were the most frequent pollutant volunteers encountered, a product that doesn’t break down for months to years and can cause a variety of problems for both humans and animals.

Residents who want to organize their own cleanup crew should contact Columbia Heights Public Works at 763-706-3700.



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