

Sunday, November 27, 2016

Receiving the New Church

Last Sunday, November 20th was the last prayer for the Bethel congregation in their church building before leaving to join another Lutheran Church in Palatine. They invited us to come and join them, so they could pray for us and officially pass on the church to us. We prayed an early liturgy in St. Mary's as we announced before, and went to join them at 10 am.



Roughly 50 members of our church and 50 members of their church attended the service.

We placed banner in the foyer of the church with this beautiful verse: *"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thess 1:2-3).

It was a tearful farewell. Pastor David delivered a nice meditation and asked me to say some words. I delivered some words of thanksgiving and appreciation, mentioning that the church will be always open for them to come anytime and join us in our prayers, and we will not forget their love and their generosity. We were all touched by a final prayer prepared by Pastor David for St. Mary's service. Here is some parts of it:

+ Prosper the work and ministry of St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church. Give wisdom and strength to its members, leaders, and pastors. Guide them as they plan for ministry in this building. The congregation responded: **Hear us, O Lord.**

+ Bless the work of St. Mary's as it helps Christians who come to the United States seeking to live in safety, practice their faith in freedom, and make a better life for their families. **Hear us, O Lord.**

+ Bless all the ministries that will take place in this building, that through the Holy Spirit a new generation might be raised up to love and serve You. **Hear us, O Lord.**

+ **Almighty and gracious God, We now pass on to St. Mary's this building and sanctuary, a place where our loved ones have been baptized, confirmed, and married, a place where we have been nurtured by the Word of God and fed at the Lord's table...May the people of St. Mary's be filled with all good things.**

After finishing the prayer we handed each member of the Bethel congregation a red rose at the door of the sanctuary. Their eyes were full of tears.

Now we got the new church, we thank God for this precious gift. For the past few months, the board has been working to plan a successful transition into Bethel Church. We are working on plans to build a beautiful iconostasis and other very important things which need to be fixed, replaced, or remodeled. The new iconostasis and pews will come from Egypt by the end of April 2017. The cost of all these projects is expected to be over \$200,000. We believe that God always provides for His work, and we rely on His care and your generosity in the few coming months.

Also we desperately need more servants to help with the board members in many tasks that should be done within the next couple of months.

May God be glorified in His Holy Church forever. Amen

Fr. Yohanna Naseef

fryohanna@hotmail.com