



THE PARISH OF  
Saint Matthew



ST. MATTHEW'S  
PARISH SCHOOL

April 30, 2025

Dear Members of our St. Matthew's Church and School Community,

We write with important updates on our recovery efforts at St. Matthew's following the Palisades Fire. We continue to make steady progress and want to share several key developments with you.

### **Debris Removal Progress**

**We are pleased to announce that the Colonel of the Army Corps of Engineers visited campus late last week to assess our Bienveneda campus – they are in the process of making our campus a top priority. We expect debris removal to begin in the next few weeks.**

Independent schools such as ours were approved for Army Corps debris removal assistance less than a month ago. Initially, this assistance was limited to single-family homes, and then extended to public schools shortly after. Our team has worked diligently through regulatory challenges to secure this approval from the state. Clearing the campus remains the most important next step in the recovery process.

### **Environmental Testing and Assessment**

We have partnered with an industrial hygienist to establish comprehensive protocols for environmental testing throughout our property. **This expert will determine what needs to be tested, how testing should be conducted, and what standards must be met to ensure the safety of our community.**

Next, we will then bring in a second independent industrial hygienist to execute on the testing protocols and provide thorough results.

Our approach of bringing in multiple hygienists will ensure thorough and reliable assessments that provide the desired confidence in our approach, timeline, and plan regarding our return to campus. If you are interested in the specifics of what is being tested for, you can contact any of the Return to Bienveneda Committee members to get a deeper explanation.

**The results from these tests will give us a greater understanding of the scope of remediation and a more specific timeline around our ability to return to campus - specifically with regards to air, water, and soil.**

The safety of our students, faculty, and parishioners is our number one priority.

## Insurance and Remediation

Our public adjuster continues to advocate strongly on our behalf with our insurance providers. They are working to ensure we receive appropriate coverage under our policy terms for both immediate cleanup and remediation and long-term reconstruction.

We are currently preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for remediation specialists who will handle the necessary cleanup in the many buildings and spaces that are still standing. **This careful selection process will help us identify the most qualified team to safely restore our campus. We anticipate the remediation process of standing structures and outdoor spaces to begin at the start of June and taking 4-6 months to complete.**

As part of its remediation of outdoor space on the campus, the Parish is implementing comprehensive plans for remediation and expansion of the Columbarium and its garden space. **Access to existing niches will be made available as soon as our hygienists have conducted necessary tests and given us their approval.**

## Financial Position

**We want to reassure our community that we are financially well-positioned to navigate this challenge.** Our school and church endowments provide essential stability, and we anticipate significant support through our insurance proceeds. Additionally, we are exploring the possibility of FEMA funds, should our situation qualify for such assistance. We are consulting with a firm that specializes in FEMA recovery efforts for nonprofits and schools to guide us through this process and maximize any potential federal support available to our institution. These combined resources position us well to not just recover, but to rebuild stronger than before.

## Path to Return

**We anticipate being able to hold limited events, with a focus on the Sanctuary (Church) and Sprague, prior to Fall 2026 on campus.**

**Returning to our campus in Fall 2026 for the School remains our goal.** We are prioritizing the shared use of spaces with the church as we work through reconstruction. We are also planning for temporary classroom spaces to be placed in suitable locations on campus while we plan and implement the reconstruction of our permanent facilities. This is a familiar practice at St. Matthew's and has been done to great success, most recently when the Lower School was housed in temporary classrooms adjacent to the pool while the Lower School and Library were being built from 2004 to 2006.

## Leadership Enhancement - Chief Operating Officer

Bruce and Alley are pleased to announce the addition of a Chief Operating Officer position for the Church and School, with the goal of welcoming this new leader to our community this summer. This new leadership position will partner with us on the multitude of operational and facilities-based tasks involved with maintaining our **temporary and partner campuses** (Stoner Ave, Water Garden, and St. Augustine by-the-Sea), the **build-out** of classroom and outdoor space at the Water Garden, as well as the **return to and rebuild that follows at our 1031 Bienvenida campus**. The COO will officially oversee all School and Church

operations and logistics, all school main office functions, school human resources, school and church facilities, and school and church safety and security. The COO will help steward our institution long into the future, in partnership with the Rector and Head of School, ensuring smooth operations across Church and School.

We appreciate your continued patience and support as we navigate this challenging recovery process. We will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available.

If you have any questions, please contact [info@stmatthewsschool.com](mailto:info@stmatthewsschool.com).

With Gratitude and Hope,  
The Return to Bienvenida Task Force



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