

Light of Christ celebrates quarter-century with public open house



By Brock Weir

There was little more than a shell in place when Greg Clancy and his staff first set foot in what was to become Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School.

Since that day in July 1991, that shell has become nothing but a distant memory as the school has become a busy, active and important fixture in the lives of southwest Aurora residents.

25 years on, Mr. Clancy, Light of Christ's founding principal, is looking forward to seeing the community once again as the school hosts a public celebration to mark its first quarter-century next Thursday, June 1.

The entire school community, including alumni, former staff, and the school's parent community are invited to come out for the festivities, starting at 1.30 p.m. when Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick will read a special anniversary blessing Mass featuring speeches from dignitaries, including Mr. Clancy, school trustee Elizabeth Crowe, and others.

The celebration continues at 5 p.m. with the school's Open House, which will showcase the school's history, an art gala featuring work by the current roster of students, and a community barbeque.

‘Our school is blessed to have a very dedicated and committed staff,’ says Principal Travis MacDonald. ‘Their commitment to the school community is inspiring as they encourage all students to work to their full potential as caring, responsible life-long learners. We are also blessed to have an active parent community who support the many initiatives and activities that help make Light of Christ an incredible school.’

Many of these sentiments are expressly shared by Mr. Macdonald's predecessor.

The teachers and kids at Light of Christ from those early days made Mr. Clancy's life a joy, he says. He knew them all by name, standing outside just about every morning welcoming the students as they got off the buses and spending the first 90 minutes or two hours of his day going from classroom to classroom.

‘The worst thing you can do is be rowing a boat and have someone in the back drilling holes,’ says Mr. Clancy. ‘We never had any of that at Light of Christ and it was a really good time for me and, hopefully, the community. It was a great community and very supportive. Before we opened, the teachers were all there getting things ready for the first day and they were in there before 8 a.m. and still there after 6 p.m. opening boxes.’

It was a bit of a rough ride getting to that point, however. When they stood in front of the shell that summer morning many of them had doubts that the building would be ready to welcome students that September. In fact, it was a bit of touch and go on the day of, with the first day of school hitting a bit of a delay as contractors hadn't yet put in the electrical plates for the light switches.

After that small hitch, however, they opened the school around 9.45 a.m. with 247 kids, excited to start the new chapter of their lives with a ‘new energy that took us through the whole year and for some years after that.’

‘That part of Aurora was a really growing community,’ says Mr. Clancy. ‘We started with 247 kids and it just mushroomed. In the

seven years I was there, we split the school twice when we got so big and they had to reorganize the boundaries and build other schools. It was an exciting place to be. You know that saying that if you love your job you never work a day in your life? That was me for that time.

?The highlights every day were going into the classrooms and seeing how much fun the kids had learning and how dedicated and how much the teachers loved teaching them. It was a joy to see the dedication of the teachers, the enthusiasm of the parents and the support we had from the community. We were really lucky. We had a great community that really supported the teachers and really supported the learning. We were really lucky to work together and there were just some fabulous people in the community who really helped us out.?

Next Thursday, Mr. Clancy is among those looking forward to sharing these memories and reconnect with ?a fabulous community? which now hosts 300 students from kindergarten through Grade 8, boasting after school programs and an on-site child care centre. Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School is located at 290 McClellan Way.

For more information on the Anniversary celebrations, contact Travis MacDonald at 905-727-5400.