

St. Aloysius Gonzaga

ADDRESS: 5608 North Magnolia Avenue **FOUNDED:** 1892

NUMBER OF FAMILIES TODAY: 315

NUMBER OF FAMILIES AT PEAK: 800 in the 1950s

FAMOUS PARISHIONER: Frank Angelo Joseph “Creepy” Crespi, a St. Louis Cardinals infielder in the 1930s and 1940s.

NICKNAME: “St. Al’s”

NAMESAKE: Aloysius Gonzaga (1568-1591), a young Jesuit theologian in Italy who died before being ordained as a priest. Gonzaga was renowned for his piety and his care of the poor and sick.

PASTOR: The Rev. John Blomberg

KNOWN FOR: Sixty years of fish fries that Blomberg says attracted a hundred diners each second Friday of the month and every Friday during Lent. He says the fish fries raised nearly \$10,000 a year.

THE CONGREGATION: The current church was built in 1926 for \$500,000. But the brick building with 45-foot

vaulted ceilings was constructed over a honeycomb of clay mines, said its former pastor, the Rev. Ralph Stroot. Over time, the ground dried and shrank, and the building settled, but not all at once. The south side, made heavier by a bell tower, drooped faster. Cracks split down the walls. “The church is actually split around the middle,” says Mary Fontana, business administrator and parishioner. And though the church often tried to bolster the building — about 15 years ago, workers put 63 pins under the foundation — nothing held.

When the church closes, its parishioners will be assigned to attend St. Ambrose on the Hill.



TEAK PHILLIPS / POST-DISPATCH

— David Hunn