



# ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Newsletter of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, February 2023, Volume 3, Issue 1

## Our Parish: Looking Back, Moving Forward

By Ann Elwell, parishioner

It's been close to two decades since St. Francis of Assisi was established. As our parish starts planning for growth, let's look back at our beginnings.

Under a blazing summer sun in 2004, a small group of Catholics gathered under a tent on a future building site on Gregg Road to celebrate Mass with its new pastor, Fr. Mark Boyer. Soon, the congregation was worshipping on Sundays in a vacant office center just off North Main Street.

From its beginning, St. Francis distinguished itself as a "total stewardship parish," one of only two in the diocese. Parishioners learned that stewardship is not only about money; it also means sharing time and talent, giving back to God for all He has first given us.

Each parishioner considered how she or he might contribute, assuming various jobs and roles, including usually paid services like janitorial and maintenance. They also committed to share in the financial health of the parish.

When they embraced total stewardship, they found their affection and dedication to St. Francis Parish grew.

But there was much to do if the little parish was going to grow to serve God, each other, and the community.

In about three years, planning began for a more permanent facility on the 11 acres purchased in 1994 by the diocese. Parishioners responded to a capital campaign with \$425,000 in pledges, meeting requirements set by the diocese. Groundbreaking in September 2009 was followed by the dedica-



*Holiday lights enhance new signage on the façade of St. Francis of Assisi Church, built in 2009. A committee of parishioners is now considering options to meet the needs of our growing parish. Gary and Mary Gale, owners of M & G Signs, Nixa, generously donated our new sign. (Photo by Jayne Parmley)*

tion of a worship/community center about a year later at a cost of \$1.1 million. In late 2017, less than a decade later, parishioners celebrated as they paid off the building mortgage in full.

In December, Fr. Shoby appointed a building committee to consider options to meet the needs of a growing parish. Should the existing facility be expanded? Would it make sense to build a new worship space?

Committee chair Brian Bingle said the group has explored lots of options and has asked local commercial contractors to determine cost estimates. Building committee members are John Clarke, Mike Ecker, Seth Hampel, Melinda Johnmeyer, Jeff Laurin, Kelly Schmitz, Mark Schweiss and Pastoral Council chair Jeff Chan, plus Deacon Gary Steffes and Fr. Shoby. More information will be shared when it's available.

**See 'Founding Members,' page 2**

## Who's in the Pews? — Brian Bingle



One of our parish's original members, Brian Bingle is the former city administrator of Nixa, serving in that role for 18 years during a period of rapid growth. During the same time, Brian took an active role in the newly formed St. Francis Parish. A member of the first long range planning committee and then Parish Council, he's also been a PSR teacher and volunteer cook. Retired in 2017, he now chairs

the parish's building committee (*see related story, above*). Brian also shares his skills and time with Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri, Least of These and the American Red Cross. Recently, Brian was deployed with the Red Cross to the U.S. border in El Paso, Texas, helping shelter recently arrived immigrants. Brian adds he finds time for "whatever gets me outside": golf, kayaking, hiking and more.

# Founding Members Find Rewards in Total Stewardship Parish

Many original members of St. Francis Parish continue to share the stewardship spirit they caught in 2004.

Past parish secretary Sheri Duncan said 43 founding families are still involved in some way. "If they had not taken ownership in the beginning . . . (we) would have been a 'drive-in Sunday' type of church, and sunk."



Barbara Rogers

Barbara Rogers was hospitality chair in the early years. "I thought it would be a good way to meet people—it was!" She is still active with sacramental dinners, receptions, and several other ministries. "St. Francis is not just a run of the mill parish. We give time and talent, too," Barbara said.



Danny Marra

Since 2007, Danny Marra has been on Finance Council. He remembers when the parish couldn't pay rent in its temporary space in a vacant office center. He had to appeal to the building's landlord. "Now we're financially stable," he said. "That takes discipline." Why stay involved? "You find rewards," Danny explained. "And I feel like I'm doing my



In 2009, Bishop James Johnston, center, and Pastor Mark Boyer were joined by parishioners to break ground for the new St. Francis church.

part. I've been blessed in so many ways."

Chris Kahl has taken on many roles since the parish was founded: usher, reader, sacristan, Mass facilitator—and she laundered altar linens and priests' albs, too. "It is my pleasure," she said. "When you give back, you're doing



Chris Kahl

this because God gives you the possibility, the talent. Everything we have and are, is because of God."

Many ministries are invisible to the larger congregation, Barbara pointed out, for example taking Holy Communion to a shut-in or providing snacks for RCIA class. But all ministries "give you the support you need to be a better Christian."

## Our Shared Journey to Create a Renewed Church St. Francis Parish Responds to Pope's Synod on Synodality

Imagine all 200-plus St. Francis parishioners traveling on the same path. Then see the path widen to include all southwest Missouri Catholics, then all Catholics in the U.S. and, finally, the world.

This shared path is driving the Synod on Synodality, established by Pope Francis, now launched by Catholics in every nation. The word "synod" comes from the Greek *synodos*, meaning "same path." Instead of the usual synod feedback from bishops only, Pope Francis has invited all Catholics to help renew the Church.

At our parish, about 70 participated in small group sessions last spring. Here is their feedback:

--Our parish helps its members grow in holiness by focusing on the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The welcoming nature of the parish was often mentioned.

--Formation of our young people must be a focus if we are to form intentional disciples. Ongoing faith development was a consistent message.

--St. Francis parishioners take seriously the priority to be sent forth to witness through community service like Least of These food drives, Adopt-a-Street clean-ups and March for Life. There's a need to increase *action* in the community, not just financial support.

--Other comments centered on the role of Church leadership, inclusion, and the overall direction of the Church.

The St. Francis Pastoral Council, chaired by Jeff Chan, used this input to update our Parish Pastoral Plan. The synod report can be viewed on our parish website at <https://tinyurl.com/SEASynodReport2022>.

Our report was added to those from across the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese. Then the U.S. Bishops Conference combined reports from all 178 dioceses—about 700,000 participants—and sent it to Pope Francis. Bishops from across the world will discuss findings in Rome in October 2023 and October 2024.

Find more information: <https://www.synod.va/en.html>



# Many Hands Needed for Liturgical Decorating

By Karen Wegand, parishioner

Who among us has not admired our church decorated for a holiday, a Holy Day or in Ordinary seasons? Behind those beautiful decorations is a hard-working committee headed by Debbie Harris.

The main areas to be decorated are the



*Cindy Muniz helps decorate the church throughout the year as a member of this ministry team.*



sanctuary and church, the chapel, and the gathering space. In Ordinary times, it includes working with flowers, plants, and other décor. Seasonal décor is prepared in advance for Advent, Christmas and Easter which last for several weeks each.

During Lent, the ministry assists by clearing decor and changing linens during the Easter Triduum, the time from the evening of Holy Thursday to the evening of Easter Sunday. Sometimes, as in the case of Easter Sunday, decorating must be done the morning of Saturday's Easter Vigil in order to remove the austerity of Lent and reflect the glory of Christ's rising.

One source of Debbie's decorating inspiration dates back to the first years of our current location when Fr. Mark Boyer asked her to lead the ministry. "I learned much from him regarding how to decorate, what was allowed, proper placement, et cetera." Kris Haik of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish has shared her decorating experience, Debbie said, and that parish has donated or loaned décor through the years. "Ideas also come from our current pastors," she added.

Throughout the year, many parishioners enjoy purchasing altar flowers in memory of a loved one or in honor of a milestone such as a wedding anniversary. When a donation is placed in a church envelope for this purpose, this information is forwarded to Debbie, who will do her best to order whatever specific plant or flower color is requested. The flower donor's name and reason for the tribute are included in the Sunday bulletin. The flowers are typically placed on a pedestal in front of the ambo (pulpit).

Helping flowers and plants retain their beauty requires volunteers to keep them

*Left: Randy Sehie can often be found caring for green plants in our worship space and assisting with seasonal décor.*



*Debbie Harris, liturgical decorating ministry chair, uses various sources to inspire altar décor. She invites any parish member to join this ministry, for a season or year-round.*

maintained. This ministry task is a good choice for someone who wants to set their own schedule for watering and dead-heading plants, etc. Helpers in this ministry can even volunteer to take a green plant or two home during the year, revitalize it, and return it for future use.

This ministry is possibly the parish's most versatile in which to volunteer. It has something for everyone. For instance, at Christmas and Easter families can volunteer together to work on decorating after a Sunday Mass specified by the committee. At season's end, they can help by removing decorations.

The Liturgical Decorating Ministry is always open to new members, as well as to creative ideas.

## Tootsie Rolls Sweeten Knights' Donation



Christian County Enterprises is the beneficiary of a \$650 donation from the Knights of Columbus, Council 13748 of St. Francis Parish.

Knights don bright yellow vests, pass out Tootsie Roll candies and collect donations each October to help people with special needs. According to Knights financial secretary Carl Schimek, the Nixa council has donated more than \$2,000 to the sheltered workshop of Christian County Enterprises over the past three years.

The sheltered workshop, located in Nixa, provides purposeful employment for those with disabilities in Christian County.

The Nixa Knights donation was featured on the front page of the Jan. 4 edition of the Christian County Headliner News.

## Our Parish Isn't Complete Without You!

Covid may have kept us apart but we're looking forward to all of us being together again.

**See You at Mass:**

**5:30 pm Saturday  
or 9:30 am Sunday**

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church  
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## Volume 3, Issue 1

Share your ideas and comments by contacting one of our team members, below. New issues are published three to four times per year. Thank you for reading!

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## International Students Think USA is OK!

By Karen Wegand, parishioner

There are a couple of new faces among our St. Francis of Assisi teenagers these days: exchange students being hosted for the school year by the Schie and Walraven families.

From the large city of Bangkok, Thailand, meet Perewich (Patrick) Karnprasertkij, 16, and a Nixa High School junior. From Calvagese, Italy, a small town of about 3,000 comes Daniele (Daniel) Bazzoli who is 17 and a Nixa senior. Both boys will have to repeat this year of schooling upon return to their own countries.

Daniel and Patrick both applauded American kids as being kinder and gentler than kids in their countries. They were also eager to men-



*The cultures of Italy and Thailand grace our parish, thanks to international students Daniel, left, and Patrick.*

tion the friendliness of teachers here, compared to the teachers at home.

Patrick loves the idea of being able to drive at 16 but finds it hard to get used to showering only once a day and wearing shoes in the house.

Daniel would like it better if school started later in the day but thinks American kids are far more independent and mature than Italian kids.

The two students find school to be full of friendly and supporting people. They love the clubs and activities and, as Daniel mentioned, the opportunity to learn new subjects such as psychology and Greek.

As far as food goes, Patrick has become a real fan of pulled pork, but our bread leaves something to be desired. Give Daniel a Domino's pizza and he's a happy camper but please, no junk food for him.

Host families are Randy Schie and John and Sara Walraven.

If you haven't met these young men, introduce yourself. Let's help them enjoy their year with us.



*Daniele (Daniel) Bazzoli*



*Perewich (Patrick) Karnprasertkij*