

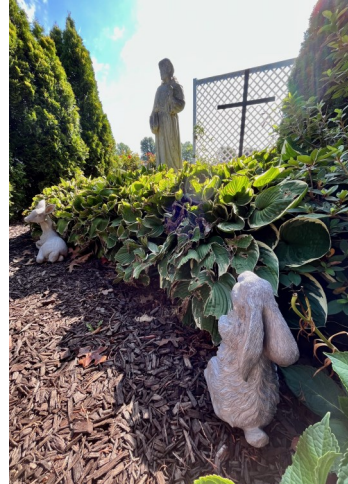


ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Newsletter of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Fall 2022, Volume 2, Issue 3

The Best Laid Plans Prayer Garden Benefits from Teen's Eagle Scout Project

By Ann Elwell, parishioner



A redo of our parish prayer garden helped Aidan Howe, left, earn Boy Scouts' highest achievement. The facelift includes a lattice screen installed by Aidan and a helper, far right.

For Aidan Howe, the calendar pages were flipping much too fast. He had lots to do, including finishing his senior year at Nixa High School. But he'd made a commitment. To himself, yes, but to others, too.

From third grade on, Aidan enjoyed being part of Boy Scouts. When he reached high school in Morris, Ill., the Eagle Scout rank was within sight. Recognized across the U.S., this achievement would require hard work and perseverance. For starters, all 21 Scout merit badges must be earned first. And the project must be completed before Aidan aged out of Scouting at 18.

"I hope parishioners can just sit down to think, to just be by themselves a bit, say a prayer."

With the support of parents Brian and Adriana, the teen started planning. Then Covid hit. His first two attempts were halted by pandemic restrictions. Next his family moved from northern Illinois to Nixa. Troop 471 in Morris was now in the past. But Aidan had set a goal.

"It's definitely harder to stay committed once you're in high school," he explained. Nixa's cross country and tennis team practices competed for his time, along with Academic Team and classwork. "It would have been 100 percent easier to give up (on Eagle Scout) but I couldn't do that," Aidan said. Back in Morris, two close friends had reached the Eagle Scout rank.

At St. Francis Parish, where he and his family are members, he heard the prayer garden needed improvements. "About March, I started thinking about it." He would have to finish it by July 16, his 18th birthday and the Scouting deadline.

"I talked to people in the parish about what needed to be im-

proved," Aidan said. Deacon Gary Steffes was especially helpful.

With all those ideas, "I planned a lot. I planned too much for the timeframe I had," Aidan smiled. He reworked his plans.

With the help of a couple of Scouts and his Scoutmaster from Nixa Troop 200, his family and a few others, the prayer garden project was completed over the July 4 holiday weekend. Aidan received his Eagle Scout rank soon after.

Visit the space, located on the church's north side, east of the entrance, to see Aidan's improvements:

- Lattice work panel featuring a wooden cross, providing a screen from the nearby neighborhood.
- Better views of the St. Francis statue thanks to a tower of landscape pavers.
- New plantings including red Knock Out roses and wisteria vines that bloom purple in spring.
- An additional layer of mulch, benefiting plants.

Aidan hopes his project brings more attention to the prayer garden. "I hope parishioners can just sit down to think, to just be by themselves a bit, say a prayer."

Though his timeframe was challenging, Aidan said the hard work was rewarding. "I have more of an appreciation for what it takes to lead a project," he said. "It's great to know you've helped someone."

Did you know?

The St. Francis prayer garden was originally created by another Eagle Scout, William Eck, son of Greg Eck of our parish. His work was completed in 2012.

Ministry Focus Small Ministry Shares Power of the Rosary

By Karen Wegand, parishioner



Carol Devine

Five years ago, the Ave Maria Rosary Guild was formed here at St. Francis Parish. Its membership has remained small. Currently, it consists of five members who take materials home and create rosaries, working at their own speed.

The amount of time they spend is of their own choosing so parishioners looking for that in a ministry would find the Rosary Guild a good match. Rosie Brookner, who heads the guild, says, "We are always looking for new members."

The materials are ordered by Rosie from Our Lady's Rosary Makers, a lay apostolate in Louisville, Ky. The kits include plastic beads with cord and plastic beads with metal.

After our guild assembles the rosaries, they are mailed to Our Lady's Rosary Makers or St. Paul's Evangelization ministry. These organizations, in turn, handle the costs to ship them where they are most needed, anywhere in the world. Many go to Africa.

Since 2015, our dedicated guild has made 51,186 rosaries. Of those, 41,000 have been made by parishioner Carol Devine.

Carol has set a goal to make 100 rosaries a week. Just think of the people who have been touched by the kindness and dedication of these thoughtful guild members! Who says one person can't make a difference?

Rosaries made by the Rosary Guild



Parish Comes Together for Fall Kickoff 2022



Ah, fall: the season of football, school openings and . . . our parish kickoff of programs for children and adults. St. Francis families gathered Aug. 21 following Mass for a potluck lunch, prizes and an overview of new programs by Deacon Gary Steffes, *right*.

The crowd also marked the birthday of our pastor. *Left*, Fr. Shoby is joined by Hazel Underwood, left, and Faith Helterbrand, who share his Aug. 25 birth date.

Below, Lincoln Silvey, 12, and Logan Silvey, 9, enjoy pinwheel party favors provided by the parish's social activities committee, led by Julie Helterbrand.



Below: Hayden Sloan, 10, shows the T-shirt he won at the fall kickoff.



New Pastor Brings Diverse Background to St. Francis Parish

By Ann Elwell, parishioner

India. Brazil. Rome. Nixa?

Many cultures, many languages, many experiences. It's this rich background new pastor Fr. Shoby Chettiyath brings to our parish.

"Each place is unique," the 43-year-old priest said. "They've helped me understand what humanity is. I've lived with the poor, with the wealthy. I've seen a lot of ups and downs."

Born in Kannur, a city of about 63,000 in southwestern India, the only son of a politician father and nursing aide mother, Fr. Shoby was ordained a priest of the Eastern Catholic Church in 2006. (The Eastern Church is in full communion with the Pope and the worldwide Catholic Church.)

For the next few years, he served parishes in India and Brazil. Three months in Rome broadened his experience but Fr. Shoby couldn't get away from where his heart was leading him: pastoral ministry as a diocesan priest.

His religious superiors were understanding of his calling. Soon the Superior General was communicating with Bishop James Johnston, then-bishop of the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese.

In 2011, five years after ordination, Fr. Shoby arrived in Joplin as associate pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church. He has since served in five more parishes, most recently at Immaculate Conception, Springfield, one of the largest parishes in southern Missouri, with the largest elementary school.

Bishop Edward Rice tapped Fr. Shoby for studies in canon law

Strengthening His Spiritual Life

Fr. Shoby is devoted to Mary. Growing up, his family gathered each day at 6:30 p.m. to say the rosary, kneeling, very memorably, on a cement floor. "Mother Mary helps me, she takes care of me through trials and tribulations," he said.

at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Five summer sessions there and many online courses culminated in a degree in canon law. When Msgr. Tom Reidy retired as Vicar General of the diocese in 2019, Fr. Shoby was appointed to the position.

As Vicar General, Fr. Shoby travels across southern Missouri as



Fr. Shoby Chettiyath grew up in southwestern India with his parents and sister and has been serving our diocese since 2011.

the bishop's "deputy," visiting priests and participating in diocesan celebrations and events. He's tasked with administrative functions of the diocese and can act in the absence of the bishop.

"It can be a full-time job," Fr. Shoby admitted, "but I make equal time for the parish." A self-described workaholic, he manages to balance both jobs while trying to cultivate interest in leisure activities. Hiking? Boating? Bowling? "We'll see," he laughed.

St. Francis Parish "is the way every parish should be," the pastor said. "There's no difference—kids, seniors, families—each is participating as they can. That's the beauty of a Total Stewardship Parish. It's not about just giving money, it's about the life of the church," he said. "Each member helps make it a thriving parish."

Since arriving in Nixa in early July, Fr. Shoby says he's focused on learning the skills and gifts of parishioners. He's holding off on big decisions. Might improved facilities for children be a starting point? "A child pulls a whole family to a parish," he said. Parents make decisions on where their children can best grow in faith and the right facilities can make a difference. "We need to entertain the possibility of what our parish can be."

Who's in the Pews? — Reid Roberts

By Karen Wegand, parishioner



Reid Roberts should be a familiar face to parishioners who attend Mass on Sundays. With his wife, Kelli, and children Arowyn, 15, Eli, 11, Nash, 7, and Josiah, 18 months, they form a pretty good-sized "prayerful pewful."

Reid is a native of Springfield who lives with his family on a ranch in Sparta. The rancher has changed directions from his former job in fine dining establishments. Ranching seems to fit perfectly with his love of the outdoors. He enjoys hunting and teaching his chil-

dren to hunt, coaching soccer and he's a fan of country music.

Reid came into the Catholic Church in 2013 through the RCIA program at St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Ozark. He recalls being a part of a very large group of candidates and catechumens and especially how he loved learning about the traditions of the Church. The Roberts family came to St. Francis of Assisi in 2018. They most enjoy the kindness and welcoming spirit practiced by parishioners here. We are so glad they are part of us.

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Building a Community

At St. Francis of Assisi Parish, something is always happening. Our newsletter team tries to capture the programs, people and ideas that make our parish a community. As always, if you'd like to comment on a story or photo feature, please contact one of our team members, below. New issues are published three to four times per year. Thank you for reading!

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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 p.m. Saturday or 9:30 a.m. Sunday

Sisters' Chalk Art Fleeting but Fabulous

By Karen Wegand, parishioner



The blank canvas of a blackboard is a favorite of Muniz sisters Abigail and Avery.

Sisters Avery and Abigail Muniz recognized an avenue for their art-work on the blank blackboard in our parish's O'Reilly Community Room.

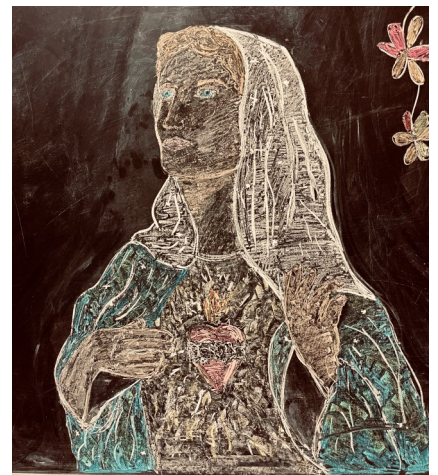
Avery, 14, says she has enjoyed drawing since the age of four and is basically self-taught. Big sister Abby, 16, has taken art classes in junior high and high school. Both girls see art as a hobby not as a future occupation, at this time.

They get their inspiration from other drawings or from upcoming events. Abby and Avery are the daughters of Cindy Muniz.

Many parishioners enjoyed their recent sidewalk drawing at the entrance of our church, which rain has since washed away. Avery tells us we can look forward to seeing more blackboard portraits of role-model saints and other holy people.

These young parishioners are sharing their God-given talents by brightening a corner of our environment. What a great inspiration they

are for the idea that we all have something to contribute to our beautiful parish. We need only to open our eyes to see the possibilities. Thank you, Abby and Avery, for reminding us.



Parishioners enjoyed a recent portrait of the Virgin Mary in the Community Room by the Muniz sisters. A youngster erased the drawing, enjoying making it "disappear".