Parking Lot Gets Facelift

The north parking lot and the west plaza area of St. Fidelis Church were replaced starting in March of this year.

The old asphalt and cement were badly cracked and there was also a concern that the lot was sloping too much toward the church foundation leading to potential water damage to the building from rain runoff. Cement boxes and tubing were positioned under the plaza and parking lot areas to catch the rain and aim the runoff towards the street at the northwest corner of the lot.

Don Marrs of Salina was hired as the engineer for the project with J Corp of Hays performing the actual work.

The last of the cement was poured June 22 with final clean up done June 28. Striping of the parking lot was completed July 7.
Parishioners of St. Fidelis Parish gathered in the Victoria Elementary School for barbecued burgers and brats on Sunday, July 31, to say good-bye to Father Mike Scully, who served as their pastor since 2007. Father Mike is now pastor at St. Joseph’s Church, Hays.

At the same time, the crowd welcomed their new pastor, Father Jeff Ernst. Father Jeff was previously director of postulants at St. Anthony Friary in Denver, Colorado.

**RIGHT:** The Jeff and Janine Kisner family converse with Father Mike at his going-away party.

**BELOW:** Doris Weigel (right) tickles Father Mike’s funny bone as she gives him a good-bye hug. Her sister, Shirley, (left) waits her turn to give Father Mike her best wishes.
ABOVE: Father Jeff Ernst addresses the crowd after being introduced as the new pastor by St. Fidelis Parish Council Chairman Tom Tholen (right).

ABOVE: Father Jeff Ernst visits with Carol and Gib Billinger (right) at his welcoming party in the grade school cafeteria.
Two local youngsters made St. Fidelis Parish proud when their drawings took First Place and Honorable Mention in the recent “God is . . .” drawing contest sponsored by the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance. In July, all children in Ellis County were invited to submit a picture representing what God is to them. The original bulletin announcement said the winning entry would grace the cover of the September issue of ONE, a monthly publication of the ECMA.

However, it was a pleasant surprise for the parish to see Madisyn Gerhardt’s first place design encompassing the entire front cover of the October issue instead. When readers of ONE flipped to the back page, they discovered that Kali Weber also proved her artistic talent by attaining one of the four honorable mentions.

Madisyn, a seventh grader at Victoria Elementary School, chose to incorporate all the references to God in her depiction of God as “The Way, the Light, and the Truth.” Kali depicted God as bringing sunshine and rainbows to a happy world filled with beautiful things.

Name: Kali Weber
Parents: John and Kami Weber
Parish: St. Fidelis
Religion Teacher: Det Younger
Age: 10
Grade in School: 5th grade

Why did you decide to enter the ONE’s “God is...” drawing contest?
Because I think I’m a good drawer and because I feel like I’m close with God.

What inspired the drawing you entered?
God and the beautiful things he created.

What activities of the Church are you currently involved in?
I’m involved in choir and in Religion class.

Are there any other comments you would like to make about Church or the drawing contest?
The church is a great place to be and that the drawing contest is a good way for kids to express how they think God is.

Are there any comments your parents would like to make about you and your involvement in Church?
I am very proud of Kali and her involvement in the church and with God. I hope she keeps learning and keeps God in her heart.
Name: Madisyn Gerhardt  
Parents: Francis and Racquel Gerhardt  
Parish: St. Fidelis

Religion Teacher: Crystal Spiess  
Age: 12  
Grade in School: 7th grade

Why did you decide to enter the ONE’s “God is...” drawing contest?  
I did it because I saw it in the bulletin. I thought that it would be a good way to spend my time and it was involved with the church.

What inspired the drawing you entered?  
Right when I was thinking of something to draw, I instantly thought of a cross and an angel. Later I thought of words that God was.

What activities of the Church are you currently involved in?  
I’m involved in religion, I'm a server, and I recently joined Jr. CYO. I was a former choir member.

Are there any other comments you would like to make about Church or the drawing contest?  
I'm thankful to be part of such a huge and beautiful church. I like being a server because I feel like I'm part of the Mass (helping with it). The drawing contest was a good idea because it made kids who entered it think about what “God is.”

Are there any comments your parents would like to make about you and your involvement in Church?  
We are proud of all of Madisyn's achievements and her involvement as a server and in Jr. CYO.
As Father Jeff Ernst gave a reading about the wonders of animals, pets and their owners patiently waited for a sprinkling at the annual Blessing of the Pets held on Tuesday, October 4, in honor of the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. About 30 animal lovers gathered on the south parking lot of St. Fidelis Catholic Church at 3:30 p.m. The number of “stuffed” pets seemed to equal the live ones this year.
**Escape Window Installed for Safety’s Sake**

A new escape window was installed in January of this year on the west side of the Parish Office building to provide easier access to the fire escape on that side of the building. The radiator under the window was removed and replaced by steps. Pictured is Chris Braun as he checks how things look on the inside of the old window while his brother Jeff Braun works on the outside.

**New Boiler in Church Basement**

An employee of Glassman Corporation, Hays, works on a new “small” boiler installed in the St. Fidelis Church basement on Thursday, January 27. This boiler heats the sanctuary area, the two sacristies (servers and priests), the chapel, and the hallway in back of the main altar. A second larger boiler supplies the heat for the main part of the church.

**Lampposts Refurbished**

Joe Brungardt, St. Fidelis Church maintenance guy, prepares to set the new lamp cover on one of the lampposts on the north side of the church back in September 2010. The posts were given a new coat of paint and new lamp globes were purchased for all four fixtures on the north and west sides of the church.

**Cracks Patched**

In between major restorations, the church sometimes needs little repairs—like fixing cracks in the walls and touching up chipped paint. McCarter Painting of Victoria started repairing the inside walls of St. Fidelis Church back on May 5 but halted their work for the Fidelisfest and Centennial celebrations. They will start up again in January after the Christmas season.
Stewardship Thrives at St. Boniface

Giving and Giving Again

What a busy year 2011 has turned out to be at Vincent. The completion of one project just led into another, and volunteers have made it all possible. The work day in the spring really “sprung up” the church and grounds. Then in May we hosted the Diocesan-wide Rural Life Day Celebration, which took much effort on everyone’s part.

Also in May, we had a windbreak planted on the north side of the church. The two-row shelter consists of 56 trees and was made possible through the cost-share program of the Ellis County Conservation District. The trees were custom planted in early May, with parishioners volunteering from that point forward. The trees were watered every week for many weeks, and sometimes twice a week in hot, dry conditions. Parishioners made ditches around each tree after planting to hold more water and then put a plastic barrier around each tree to help conserve water and eliminate weeds. The windbreak was a project that greatly fostered stewardship in our parish children.

Watering the trees was definitely something they could do by themselves, and they sweat in the heat many hours watering this summer. Well, at least they perspired up until the point of getting into “water fights” with the hoses. Children are children and they definitely found a way to cool themselves! They even got me a few times! In a few years of growth, the windbreak will definitely provide us with “the fruits of our labor.”

Next around the corner was our Herzogfest fundraiser. There again it was all about giving as all the costs of the fundraiser were donated by parishioners. We sold chicken and noodles and galushkies, had a country store, and held two raffles. The quilt raffle of the 13 Catholic churches in Ellis County was won by Ellen Dreiling of Hays. The beef raffle consisted of four quarters of beef with the processing paid. The winners were Paul Schippers, Seth Schulte, and Francis Gerhardt, all of Victoria, and Randy Weigel of Kansas City. The proceeds of the fundraiser are going toward the renovation of the Sisters House at Vincent, which will begin in November.

On Sunday, July 31, 2011, we had yet another event—a farewell party for Fr. Mike and a welcome to our new pastor, Fr. Jeff. We had a cake.

ABOVE: Fred Tholen (left) supervises as children of St. Boniface Parish place a plastic barrier around a newly-planted tree. Seated (left to right): Payden Leiker and Sam Leiker. Standing (left to right): Lakin Eckroat, Levi Huser, and Rosston Eckroat.

TOP CENTER: Children of St. Boniface parish water the trees in the new windbreak.

Photos on this and adjoining page by Randy Huser
The drive was mailed out in November to all who had past ties to Vincent.

Lastly is our sale of Christmas cards. Many Christmas cards have a painting of a country scene on them, so we have made a country scene for real. Last winter Neil Rajewski drove by the church on a cold, snowy winter day when he noticed the scenery of the St. Boniface Church with snow on the ground and the trees covered white. He called and told me to bring my camera up to the church and possibly get Christmas cards made for next season of the wintry scene of the church. Neil’s thought is now a reality. The front of the card is a picture of the snowy country church and trees, and on the inside of the card is a night picture of the interior of the church with the lights out and all candles lit, along with the crib scene lit up—a picture of peace. The cards were available for sale beginning the first part of November.

Our parish council—Carol Freitag, Mike Eckroat, and myself—are thankful for everyone’s cooperation in this busy year, and we realize it’s not over yet. In many ways it’s like our parish is one big parish council working together!

made for each priest that we presented to them at the end of Mass. For the closing song, Janice Braun led the choir with her guitar in a special priestly song entitled “Happy the Man,” as Fr. Mike and Fr. Jeff stood behind their cakes. Parishioners prepared a roast beef supper with many desserts for all to enjoy after Mass on the church grounds. At the final blessing of Mass, a loud thunder filled the church and rain fell at a fast pace. Plans had to change at that point, so we ate the meal in church with the approval of Fr. Mike. I don’t think he and Fr. Jeff were about to say “no” to all that good food prepared, just eat it wherever. We were very happy and thankful for the rain.

Volunteers of the parish are also working to start a capital improvement fund drive for the upkeep and improvements of the parish.

ABOVE: Father Jeff Ernst (left) and Father Mike Scully enjoy the music as they wait to cut into their welcoming and good-bye cakes at St. Boniface Church. Janice Braun strums the guitar as Mike Eckroat (second from right) joins the choir in a special song for the friars.

ABOVE: Taking time to cut and staple tickets for St. Boniface’s Herzogfest hog and quilt raffles are (left to right) Payden Leiker, Melany Huser, Greg Huser, and Samantha Leiker.

LEFT: The aroma of galushkies and chicken and noodles draws customers to the St. Boniface Parish booth at Herzogfest.
St. Isidore, whose feast day is May 15, is the patron saint of farmers and rural communities and was adopted as the patron of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. His feast is celebrated annually by the Salina Diocesan Rural Life Commission. This year the celebration was held on Saturday, May 7, and included tours of area churches in Victoria, Walker, Pfeifer, and Vincent. A visit to St. Mary, Help of Christians Church in Gorham was supposed to be part of the tour but was eliminated due to time constraints.

About 20 people from all around the Salina Diocese gathered with Father Allen Scheer, moderator of the Rural Life Commission, to tour the churches, starting at 10:30 a.m. with St. Fidelis Catholic Church in Victoria. Ivan Werner, one of several volunteer tour guides for St. Fidelis, lead the group down the center aisle as he explained how the approximately 300-pound limestone blocks used in the church were quarried. He also mentioned how John Linenberger, a local mason, was the only worker who fell during the construction of the church. In gratitude to God for not being hurt, Linenberger built two of the side altars that now reside in the church.

At the conclusion of the St. Fidelis tour, the group drove to Meridy’s in Russell for lunch and then traveled in their individual cars to St. Ann Catholic Church in Walker. Shirley Brungardt, a St. Ann parishioner, filled in as a last minute tour guide and enlightened the group about St. Ann’s history. She told of how delegates of the congregation approached the Bishop at the time telling him they had $2,000 to build a church. Upon hearing of the meager amount, the Bishop asked them, “Do you plan to build a chicken coop with that?” Slightly hurt and insulted, church members went back and assessed each family enough to bring that amount up to $3,000. That was enough to get the construction started. Final cost of the building completed in 1905 and its contents was $11,732.

It was then on to Holy Cross Church in Pfeifer where Carol Billinger awaited the tour participants. While no longer open as a parish, Holy Cross Church is still a beautiful edifice to view. Carol spoke proudly of her former parish but also expressed sadness as she related how the Blessed Sacrament was removed from the church after the last Mass was celebrated on July 6, 1993. Named one of the 8 Wonders of Kansas Architecture in a contest sponsored by the Kansas Sampler Foundation, the church is maintained now through donations to Holy Cross Charities, a non-profit organization started with the help of the Bishop. Two Masses a year are celebrated there—around the anniversary of the dedication of the church on May 3 and around the Exultation of the Holy Cross on September 14. Carol told the group that when Monsignor Francis Senecal, the last resident pastor, first arrived, he brought along his own tabernacle, so Holy Cross’s tabernacle went to a church in Russell. In recent years, Holy Cross tried in vain to get the original tabernacle back. Finally, in 2009, after proving the tabernacle in the Russell church belonged to Holy Cross because of the “1918 made in Chicago” plaque on the lower right side of the tabernacle and because of its unique “click” when opening and closing it, the original tabernacle was returned to its proper place at Holy Cross.

Breaking away from the beauty of Holy Cross Church was hard, but around 3:30 the tour group headed over to Vincent where the St. Boniface parishioners outdid themselves. They not only gave a tour of their church but they also arranged for the Saturday evening Mass to be celebrated there at 4:00, after which they served a potluck meal to their guests. Randy Huser, St. Boniface Pastoral Council member, gave a presentation in church before Mass. He mentioned their beloved pastor, Father Callistus Rectenwald, who served the parish for 52 years. According to Randy, Father Callistus prayed five rosaries a day asking that he could die among his people. The Sunday after Easter in 1980 he passed away at age 83 as he was leaving the sanctuary after saying Mass. Following Randy’s presentation, Father Allen Scheer celebrated the Mass and blessed seed wheat.
RIGHT: Randy Huser (at podium) gave the group a history of St. Boniface Church before Mass. After Mass, the St. Boniface Choir drew the crowd to a field outdoors with guitar music and the song “God of the Plains.” A potluck supper was waiting for everyone in the church garage after the field blessing.

LEFT: Carol Billinger demonstrates to tour participants how the Holy Cross Church bells used to be rung by pulling on thick ropes at the church’s entrance.

RIGHT: Shirley Brungardt (standing right) directed the group to the Latin wording “Haec Est Domus Domini,” meaning “This is the house of the Lord,” that is written across the upper wall of St. Ann Church by the sanctuary.

LEFT: Ivan Werner (arms in the air) amazed the tourists when he told them the beautiful stained glass windows in St. Fidelis Church were originally purchased for around only $3,000.
It was all there again—plus more. The 16th Annual Fidelisfest on Memorial Day 2011 involved the usual visits to the local cemeteries, a Mass followed by a German wedding-style dinner with all the food and supplies donated by Warren’s Meat Market, the auction, the country store, kids games, musical entertainment, and the money raffle. This year, however, the celebration had a little extra thrown in because it was also St. Fidelis Church’s 100th anniversary.

The church bells were rung every hour on the hour from 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Nowadays, electric motors control the bells, but for over 30 years, Brother Wendelin Wiesner, sacristan and gardener for St. Fidelis Church from 1895 until 1961, faithfully rang the bells manually by pulling ropes that hung in the church vestibule.

Four local people were lucky winners in the Raffle. JoAnn Braun won the $2,000 2nd place prize, while Vitus Lang, Delilah Green, and Helen G. Windholz each took home one of the $500 prizes. The other three prizes went to donors from Great Bend, Colby, and Wichita.

**LeeAnn Wins Book Naming Contest**

As part of the Cathedral of the Plains Centennial Celebration, a “Name the History Book” contest was held in April to come up with a name for the parish directory/history book that will be produced in the near future. LeeAnn Schmidtberger was announced as the winner during the Fidelisfest activities and was awarded $100 for her efforts.

Her winning name entry was “Faith and Courage... 100 Year Legacy”. LeeAnn’s suggestion was one of 20 entries in the contest.
Ladies of the parish—(left to right) Darlene Dreiling, Louise Hammerschmidt, JoAnn Braun, and Gloria Braun—man the Country Store in a corner of the grade school gymnasium.

Kathy Kuhn assigns a number to a Fidelisfest auction bidder who had over 200 donated items to choose from.

Members of the Boy Scouts of America present the flags while Amanda Braun (right) sings the “Star Spangled Banner” in honor of our veterans of wars.

The tin gym provided lots of room for games for the youngsters during the annual Fidelisfest.

Can’t tell who’s enjoying grilling the brats and hamburgers on the Traeger for the outside food stand—more—Elmer Dinkel (left) or Ollie Kuhn?

Sisters Connie Dreiling (center) and Janie Dinges (right) have a blast serving up the German wedding-style meal to over 450 hungry Fidelisfest guests.

A Minnie Mouse auction item makes one little girl very happy.

Ladies of the parish—(left to right) Darlene Dreiling, Louise Hammerschmidt, JoAnn Braun, and Gloria Braun—man the Country Store in a corner of the grade school gymnasium.
Members of the St. Fidelis Centennial Committee, as well as other volunteers, need to be congratulated for the superb job they did on organizing the 100th anniversary celebration of the “Dedication of the Cathedral of the Plains.”

Members of the committee were Kurt and Shanna Dinkel, John and Sonya Linn, Gladys Pfeifer, Troy and Geralyn Schippers, Jan Brungardt, Ivan and Verda Werner, and Cora Schulte and the late Benny Schulte.
After a little confusion about the date and some worried organizers wondering what happened to the tent guys, the “big tops” went up Saturday evening, August 27, 2011, in time for the big celebration of the 100th anniversary of the original dedication of St. Fidelis Catholic Church, “The Cathedral of the Plains.”

Original plans were for Menges Rental Inc. out of Ellinwood, Kansas, to set up two big tents early Friday morning, August 26. Ivan Werner was up bright and early to meet them, but they didn’t show. Calls were made trying to locate them but that was met with no luck. Organizers began to worry that something may have happened to the Menges workers as they were scheduled to set up a number of tents in Topeka the day before they arrived here. Calls were made to other people living in Ellinwood to try to find out the circumstances. Finally, Saturday afternoon, contact was made. Apparently, the company thought the tents were needed the following weekend.

Once the connection was made, the Menges family arrived with the two huge tents on the back of a trailer and began raising them south of the Victoria Grade School between the friary and the tin gym.

Mitch Menges and his brother Mark, along with several other family members, worked hard to get the tents pitched by dark. They are owners of the company along with brothers Mike and Matt. Their father, Jerry, was part of the crew until he passed away on April 15 of this year.

Mitch mentioned that he donated the use of 500 of their chairs for this celebration because of his father. Jerry Menges had visited the church shortly before his death and said some prayers. “Dad loved to pray and visited churches all the time,” Mitch said. After that visit to St. Fidelis Church, Jerry Menges telephoned Ivan Werner and informed him about their rental company.

Ivan then made arrangements with the company to set up the tents for the Centennial. Mitch, who calls himself the “runner” for the company providing the labor and doing the bidding, decided to honor his Dad and the visit he made to pray by donating the use of 500 chairs.

Menges Rental Inc. installs tents, tables, and chairs throughout the state of Kansas for various occasions such as county fairs, auctions, company picnics, and more. They also provide commercial and display fireworks.

While the Menges group was raising the second tent, a number of parishioners from St. Boniface Catholic Church brought in their tent and set it up south of the big tents across the driveway. The St. Boniface parish sponsored a drawing for a quilt that highlighted the various Catholic Church’s in the area, and honored St. Fidelis’s Centennial celebration by positioning the church’s picture in the center of the quilt. They had planned to use the tent to exhibit the quilt in the afternoon, but wound up staying in the grade school gym throughout the day.
THE MONUMENT

During the planning stages of the centennial celebration for the “Cathedral of the Plains,” the St. Fidelis Centennial Committee proposed placing a monument on the south front lawn of the church to welcome visitors. As plans progressed, ideas to incorporate a limestone base in the design and use it as a home for the planned time capsule emerged. A granite monument was purchased from Daren Lang, while he and his son, Taylor, donated their labor for the design and lettering of it as well as for the limestone preparation and cap fabrication. The limestone for the base and cap was donated by the Floris Dome and Leon Huser families.

Cement was poured in September 2010 in preparation for the planting of bushes on October 5, 2010, by Hays Greenhouse employees with help from Joe Brungardt and Ivan Werner. Ivan and Joe were later joined by Gertie Staab, Carl Staab, and Cora Schulte as they laid black weed barrier and decorative rocks around the bushes which should grow to a height of three feet.

In June of this year, Daren, Taylor, and Deloyd Sander built the limestone base. And then on August 23, Daren and Taylor carefully placed the granite monument with its side bench atop the base. A crew from the Centennial Committee and others were on hand to help cover the monument with a tarp until its scheduled unveiling during the August 28 Centennial ceremony. On August 24, Daren Lang and Glen Unrein positioned the donated benches around the monument.

Initially selecting the eight beatitudes and the ten commandments for the wording on each side of the monument, the committee eventually settled on Bible passages from Matthew that emphasizes the first two commandments of loving God and neighbor and a welcoming verse that stresses caring for others. Daren Lang and son, Taylor, and Deloyd Sander and son, Curtis, were given the honors of unveiling the monument on the day of the centennial celebration of the “Dedication of the Cathedral of the Plains.”

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD, YOUR GOD, WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. THIS IS THE GREATEST AND FIRST COMMANDMENT. YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. THE WHOLE LAW AND THE PROPHETS DEPEND ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS.

MATTHEW 22:37-40

I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD. I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME DRINK. YOU WERE A STRANGER AND YOU WELcomed ME. YOU WERE NAKED AND YOU CLOTHED ME. YOU WERE IN PRISON AND YOU VISITED ME. WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES, YOU DID FOR ME.

MATTHEW 25:35-40

Photo below and right by Dana Lang
Visitors arrived early the morning of Sunday, August 28, so they could be a part of the blessing of the Centennial Monument which rests on the south front lawn of St. Fidelis Catholic Church. The ceremony began at 9:30 with Shanna Dinkel, Centennial Committee member, introducing participants in the day’s activities leading up to the unveiling of the monument.

The father and son teams of Daren and Taylor Lang and Deloyd and Curtis Sander removed the tarp that had hidden the monument from public view.

Shortly after the unveiling, Bishop John B. Brungardt blessed the monument, after which Bishop Emeritus George K. Fitzsimons read a papal blessing that the parish received. Then Kansas Lieutenant Governor Jeff Colyer introduced his daughter Serena, who read a proclamation from Kansas Governor Sam Brownback proclaiming August 28, 2011, as “Cathedral of the Plains Day.”

Father Jeff Ernst, pastor of St. Fidelis, then read a “Litany of Thanksgiving” which recognized, among others, the German-Russian immigrants who inspired the building of the church, the Capuchin priests and brothers who have served the parish since 1878, and the Sisters of Saint Agnes who served and taught in the schools for 110 years, arriving in 1879.
LEFT: Geralyn Schippers serves as a lector for the anniversary Mass.

BELOW: Members of the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus stand guard as Tom Tholen leads the procession carrying the Papal flag, followed by the American flag, and the Kansas flag.

BELOW LEFT: John and Sonya Linn, members of the Centennial Committee, and their daughter Erika process in with the streamer poles along with committee members Troy Schippers and Curt Dinkel.

BELOW: The bishops and priests who helped celebrate the Mass are (from left) Fr. John Lager, Fr. Charles Polifka, Fr. Harvey Dinkel, Bishop John Brungardt, Fr. Mike Patullo, Bishop Emeritus George Fitzsimons, Fr. Mike Scully, Fr. Alvin Werth, and Fr. Felix Petrovsky.

BELOW: Fr. Michael Scully is surrounded by servers Emily Schippers and Ally Dinkel and commentator Shanna Dinkel as he gives his homily during the anniversary Mass.

RIGHT: Katie Scheck presents a prayer book and rosary to Bishop John Brungardt during the offertory procession.
As Father Michael Scully, former pastor of St. Fidelis Parish, stated in his homily during the “Dedication of the Cathedral of the Plains” 100th anniversary Mass, “...a worthy house of God had to be beautiful...had to be big...had to be a statement of faith...” That may well be what our forefathers had in mind when they chose to erect the “largest church west of the Mississippi” starting back in 1908 with completion in 1911.

On Sunday, August 28, 2011, a beautiful Mass was celebrated honoring those ancestors and their strong Catholic faith. Organist Leona Schulte provided instrumental music as 34 organizations and groups involving over 100 people processed down the center aisle at the beginning of Mass. Bishop John B. Brungardt (of the Dodge City Diocese and whose grandfather Balthaser Brungardt grew up in Victoria) presided over the Mass, along with Bishop Emeritus George Fitzsimons. Joining them were Capuchin priests Fr. Mike Scully, Fr. Charles Polifka (who began the planning of the Centennial celebration when he was a pastor here starting back in 2004 and who grew up in Hays), Fr. Felix Petrovsky (former pastor), Fr. Harvey Dinkel (who grew up in Victoria), Fr. Jeff Ernst (current pastor), Fr. John Lager, Fr. Simon Conrad, and Fr. Mike Patullo (in postulancy formation with the Capuchins). Also helping out was Fr. Alvin Werth, a diocesan priest originally from Schoenchen.

The offertory presentations included German prayer books and rosaries belonging to early parishioners Andreas Dinkel and Katherine (Kuhn) Dinkel, blueprints used to construct the church, a stone hammer used in dressing the stone for the church, baptismal records from the early years of the parish, and a block and tackle (pulley) used to hoist material during construction.

Fr. Mike Scully held an antique aspersgill and holy water font as he and Bishop John Brungardt made their way around the interior of the church to bless the walls.

Throughout the Mass, the St. Fidelis Cathedral Choir filled the air with beautiful music.

Approximately 32 currently active altar servers took part in the Centennial Mass. A number of brown server robes, reflecting the attire worn by the Capuchin priests and brothers who have served the St. Fidelis Parish since 1878, were purchased or borrowed and worn by the group. They processed in and sat in reserved pews at the front of the church.
The St. Fidelis Centennial Committee wanted the parishioners of the parish to be able to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the “Dedication of the Cathedral of the Plains” as much as possible and not have to worry about spending hours in the kitchen preparing the meal that would be served mid-day. And they wanted to serve some good, old-fashioned German food. So they hired Jeannette Pfannenstiel and Helen Werth of Munjor to prepare and serve a meal consisting of noodles and beans; dumplings, sauerkraut, and kielbasa; meatballs, and galuskiés (pigs in the blanket), along with the standard green beans, hot rolls, dessert, and drinks. 

The freewill offering meal brought in $6,347.75 and served 990 people in the Victoria Grade School gym, cafeteria and 40 take outs. Compliments about the great food were heard for days afterwards.

While Jeannette and Helen brought in some of their own workers to help with the cooking and serving, members of the congregation did bring baked goods for dessert and directed the long line of traffic as the diners snaked their way from the church over to the north entrance of the grade school building and into the music room where the buffet lines were set up.

Victoria High School students helped the Friday before the event with setting up tables and chairs.

Andy Kuhn randomly places plates of cake on a table which was eventually filled with delicious homemade desserts.

Jane Wagner (right) scoops up a ladle of noodles to a hungry visitor in the grade school's music room.

The weather being as hot as it was the day of the centennial celebration prevented the clowns in town from painting faces, but they did manage to sprinkle a little glitter on eager young faces and entertain the crowd waiting in line for the German dinner. They even got involved in the Minute to Win It games held in the afternoon.

The Clowns for Jesus describe themselves as a “rag-tag group of goofballs who enjoy getting together to spread fun...and the Gospel.” They were invited by the Centennial Committee to join the crowd at the centennial as part of the day’s entertainment. The veteran clown in the bunch — “D. D.” — is actually a teacher at Ellsworth Elementary School. She is joined in her clowning activities by her sixth-grade daughter, “Dot”; a niece, “Dip”; and a friend, “JoJo”
A celebration as big as the 100th anniversary of the “Dedication of the Cathedral of the Plains” probably would not have been as wonderful if not for the melodies that were heard throughout the day. First of all, we are blessed with a wonderful church choir that can sing with the best of them. Their beautiful voices resonated through the “cathedral” adding so much to the beauty of the entire centennial Mass. The choir was directed by Kathy Dreiling-Amrein. Leona Schulte played the organ.

In the afternoon, starting at 2:00, a different kind of music was heard. The Hays High Plains Barbershop Chorus graced us with their melodic voices for about 45 minutes. They were joined by the Prairie Timbre Quartet. The chorus, formed in 1968, is made up of over 30 male voices from Ellis County and the nine counties surrounding it. Four gentlemen from the chorus compose the quartet.

Following the barbershop chorus, the crowd was entertained by a former Hays resident, Larry Weigel, who bills himself as Opa’s One Man German Band. Larry is the son of local noted Volga German historian, Lawrence A. Weigel. Entwined with his songs were stories about his German ancestors.

Members of the St. Fidelis Cathedral Choir practice in a darkened church the night of August 24.
A small group of youngsters braved the heat the afternoon of the Cathedral of the Plains Centennial Celebration and went home with a pocket full of money. The heat deterred many from competing in the Minute to Win It games held in the courtyard east of the friary under one of the big tents, but those that did participate had fun. Every youngster was a winner at some point. For most of the games, four contestants competed against each other and the winner received $5. The games were based on those played on the television show “Minute to Win It.” Even some of the adults in the crowd tried their hand at the “Baby Rattle” game which required contestants to shake beans from one bottle into another attached bottle.

The games were played from 1:00 until 4:00 and the youngsters that competed, as well as the high school students who helped judge the event, graciously offered their help to pack up the items used in the games and move them to the Parish Office. Connie Windholz organized the games and received help with preparations, judging, and cleanup from her sisters Wanda Klaus and Dotty Legleiter, her brother Ralph Windholz Jr. and her friends, Teri VonFeldt, Dorothy Goetz, and Phyllis Stramel.
Part of celebrating history is remembering how things used to be. To help jog the memories of those attending the 100th anniversary of the “Dedication of the Cathedral of the Plains,” old photos of the current and previous churches in the early years were blown up and hung on the Victoria Grade School gym walls. Other scenes of the “good old days” from the church and town history were also displayed.

Tables along the south wall of the gym held antique items used in the church or during Masses throughout the years. The items included such things as host cutters and a host baker press; clappers (klappern) that the altar boys used on Holy Saturday to take the place of ringing bells; various sized chisels, axes, hammers, pulleys, and feathers and wedges used in the construction of the “cathedral;” blueprints for the building; aerial photographs of the town; and an aspersgill and holy water font used for sprinkling holy water during Mass. The aspersgill and font were salvaged from the junk yard by Fritz Dreiling, as were some of the reeds from the church’s original pipe organ.

One artifact missing from display was the sedile designed and built in 1913 by John Linenberger for the sanctuary and used by the priests officiating in the Eucharist. It was replaced in 1967 by the current chairs. The sedile is now owned by Cindy Villarreal and sits in the front room of her Ellis residence.

Another aspect of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the “Cathedral of the Plains” was the selection of items to be placed in a time capsule. Most are already in the capsule, but we are awaiting the completion of a church directory/history book so it can be included. A ceremony will then be held to officially seal the capsule and the base of the centennial monument where the capsule will reside for the next 100 years.

Cora Schulte is diligently working on composing the final text for the history book. Previously, Diana Pfeifer, Shanne Dinkel, Ivan and Verda Werner, and Connie Windholz read through early church bulletins, Parish Council minutes, and other sources to gather the church history for the book. Jeani Billinger and Nancy Matt offered their services to organize the data into a logical and readable format. Once the text is complete, Connie will format the book for publishing, which we hope to have ready in the early part of 2007.
Baccalaureate Mass was held for the 2011 graduating seniors of Victoria High School on Sunday, May 15, at 10:00 a.m. in St. Fidelis Catholic Church, Victoria, with Fr. Michael Scully, O.F.M. Cap., officiating. Members of the class participating in the Mass were (l-r, front) Ciera Kohl, Falynn Wasinger, Anna Kuhn, Desirae Karlin, Taylor Kisner, Andrea Dome, Janessa Brungardt; (second row) Steven Hotaling, Kameron Dinkel, Jordan Bleske, Dylan Kuhn, Colin Schmidtberger; and (back row) Cody Scheck, Fr. Michael Scully, pastor, and Kyle Schmidt.

ABOVE: The singing trio of Trilogy sang for the Baccalaureate Mass accompanied by Leona Schulte. Pictured from left are Jerry Schmidtberger, Rick Rupp, and Leroy Schmidtberger.

St. Fidelis Church set up a booth again this year at the annual Victoria City Herzogfest held Friday and Saturday, August 12-13. And, as usual, the volunteers were out in full force to make sure things got done.

LEFT: Ed Brungardt and Kenny Brungardt load food for the booth on a trailer.

FAR LEFT: Verda Werner, Wilma VonLintel, and Jane Wagner get the giggles as they prepare sausage for the dumplings.

LEFT: Tina Kuhn and Arlene Pfeifer help keep the dishes washed and ready to use again.

ABOVE: There were plenty of workers at the St. Fidelis booth on Main Street.
RIGHT: Members of the St. Fidelis Jubilee Choir gathered in the choir loft to sing for the National Children’s Day Mass at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 9. Children in grades 3 through 6 are invited to join the Jubilee Choir each school year.

LEFT: Children in kindergarten through sixth grade were called to process down the center aisle of St. Fidelis Catholic Church and then line up along the Communion railing for the National Children’s Day blessing given by Father Jeff Ernst at the beginning of Mass on Sunday, October 9. Each child was given a battery operated candle in remembrance of the day.

National Children’s Day

Sunday, October 9, 2011
The annual Newcomers Welcoming Potluck was held at the Knights of Columbus Hall on Sunday, October 30, starting at 4:30 p.m. Eight “newcomers” to the tri-parish area enjoyed a delicious potluck meal with about 30 well-wishers from the community.

After supper, Fr. Jeff Ernst got everyone hipped up to play Bingo and got in a few games himself before he had to leave to lead prayers at a wake service. Once all the great prizes provided by Daughters of Isabella and Christian Mothers members were distributed, those in attendance played a few rounds of pinochle. Door prizes were also drawn.

Introducing the Newcomers

RON AND CAROL KATT — Have lived in Victoria since March 2011. Purchased the former Vernon and Norma Berens house. Are neighbors to Cora Schulte (who they extolled as being a wonderful neighbor but one who keeps “odd” hours). Originally from Grainfield.

MEL GABEL — Grew up in Hays. Recently lived in Atlanta, Georgia, where his daughter resides. Lives on Elm Street in Victoria. Was accompanied to the potluck by his friend, LeAnn Sack.

GAYLA HERBEL — Is a doctor at Hays Med transferring from Loveland, Colorado. Has rented a home north of the Post Office in Victoria for about four months. Is needing to find a new place to live but would like to stay in Victoria.

ALLEN NIALS — Originally from New Mexico, but moved to Victoria from Russell. Lives on Elm Street in the former Pete and Leona Wellbrock house.

JEANETTE WALLACE — Lived in Hays then Lucas Luray then Ellis and now resides in Victoria on Cathedral cattycorner from her neighbor Katie Scheck. Her husband works at United Ag.

FATHER JEFF ERNST — Grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. Transferred here from Denver, Colorado, to serve as pastor for the tri-parishes.
Memorial Mass
Sunday, October 30

40 loved ones who were buried or had their funeral Mass at St. Ann, St. Boniface, St. Fidelis, Holy Cross (Pfeifer), or Sacred Heart (Emmeram) Churches or Cemeteries from September 5, 2010, through October 8, 2011, were remembered.

Lighting candles for their loved ones were:

Top: Yvonne Braun and Paul Brungardt for their brother, Gilbert Brungardt.

Left: Mary Kay Schippers for her mother, Sophia Berens.

Right: Bernita Schrant for her father, Alfred P. Rohr.
Parishioners of St. Ann Church gathered in the Parish Hall after Mass on Sunday, October 23, to share their “Happy Birthday” wishes for Father Jeff Ernst. The Christian Mothers provided the cinnamon rolls, kuchens, and fruit bowls and, of course, the birthday cake.  

Photos by Shirley Brungardt

Praying for Rain
You Just Have to Believe

I woke up this morning (Sunday, October 9) hearing raindrops on the roof. At noon it was still raining, so I got a pen and paper and thought I ought to write something about this gift of RAIN.

Who will ever forget the hot dry summer of 2011? The winter went by with little snow, and the spring brought few rains. By April 1st, pastures were not greening up and the wheat was looking pale green. We needed rain soon or else....

Parishioners of St. Boniface never forget the power of prayer in droughts past, and were going to try to reach the sky once again. Starting April 1st, Darlene Braun and Payden Leiker led the congregation in a rosary three nights a week, along with Fr. Callistus’s Prayer for Rain, and St. Peregrine’s Cancer Prayer. Candles were also lit. When summer got busy for farmers, we met only on Monday nights at 8:00 p.m. until the middle of September.

In these months, our farmers received rainfall from time to time, had a good wheat harvest, had grass for our cattle, and have baled feed for the winter season ahead. We were still dry at times, but in comparison, our prayers were answered. Fr. Callistus was a believer in praying for rain, the old timers tell me, and so today that tradition still lives on in our parish, and for a reason. Dennis and Kay VonLintel were happy to receive a total of over 5 inches of rain on their farm during that hot July month. Their pond ran over. Rick and Janice Braun and Keith and Karen Leiker felt the amazing impact on their farms as well.

When our bodies thirst, we get a glass of water. When our crops and pastures—which are so much a part of us—begin to thirst, all we can do is PRAY FOR RAIN.