

# St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

www.stpaturbana.org

January 2025

## Squishy Christmas

Most of the seasons of the church year end crisply. Advent ends at sunset on Christmas Eve. Lent ends at sunset on Holy Thursday. The Easter season ends after 50 days with the feast of Pentecost. But the Christmas season seems to be a little more open-ended.

The octave of Christmas ends on January 1 with the celebration of Mary as Mother of God. During those days, we sing the Glory to God at Mass, along with the angels at Bethlehem. The following Sunday is the feast of Epiphany, and you might expect that the Christmas season ends then. It's the "twelfth day of Christmas," after all. But, no. The white festal vestments continue to be used for another week, through the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, marking the end of the Christmas season.

After that, we settle down to our ordinary green vestments until – surprise! – February 2. On that day, we again remember Jesus as an infant. It's the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the temple. Why is the end of the Christmas season so...

squishy?

One good clue is found in the gospel readings that the Church has given us during these days. During the octave of Christmas, we recall the stories of Jesus' infancy. But after that, the gospel readings turn to the early days of his public ministry. We hear story after story of people encountering Jesus for the first time

and trying to figure out who he is. So, for most of the Christmas season, we're meeting Jesus as an adult, not as a helpless babe. The task and the challenge that the Church is giving us during the Christmas season is to

recognize the presence of Jesus and to ponder what his life means for us.

We recognize Jesus in the child of Bethlehem. God chose to come among us, to restore for us the gift of life with him forever. He could have come as he did in ancient Israel, as a pillar of fire or a mighty cloud. Instead, he chose to be as close to us as possible, becoming human. How better could he show his love for us, his desire to draw us close to himself?

see **Squishy Christmas** on page 4



## A cup of Christmas for our friends

Each year parishioners at St. Patrick prepare a little Christmas gift for our Friends of the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. Donated Christmas mugs are filled with items donated by parishioners. Mug "stuffers" include both sweet treats and practical items such as gloves, socks, or toiletries.

A lively group of volunteers met on December 11 and enjoyed coffee and Christmas music as they worked together to prepare 179 gift bags with mugs and many other bags with treats only. Our Friends are always delighted by this small gesture. Thanks to all of you who make this magic happen!



# From a kid's perspective: Donuts with Santa

By Lena Wright

The Donuts with Santa event had excellent attendance this year. Kids were singing carols and filling out wish lists for Santa.



Parents were chatting and friends were catching up. The donut crew was ready and coordinated in personalized shirts for the wave of people too. If you didn't come don't worry,

there's always next year. Enjoy these interviews from the event:

## An interview with Santa

Lena: How long have you been delivering presents?

Santa: Most of my life.

L: Do you have any kids?

S: Yes, two.

L: How many elves do you have?

S: Around 400 elves that work in the factories.

L: How many presents do you make every year?

S: Too many to count. Millions!

L: How long have you and Mrs. Claus been together?

S: A long, long time.

L: Are you St. Nick?

S: Yes.

L: Do you deliver presents 2 times a year?

S: Yes.

L: How old are you?

S: Centuries old.

Bonus fact: Santa's hair used to be red!

After my interview with Santa, I interviewed Fr. Anthony:

Lena: How did you get Santa to come St. Patrick's?

Fr. Anthony: Inside connections.

L: Who gave you all the donuts?

Fr. A: The generous people from Coffee Shop who sponsored us so you can have too much sugar and talk with Santa.

Then Fr. Anthony said I need a hat to look official.

That was all for his interview, now time to interview a kid!

Lena: How long have you celebrated Christmas?

Kid: 10 years (all their life).

L: Do you get elves every year?

K: Two elves.

L: Have you met with Santa yet?

K: Not yet.

L: Have you tried the donuts yet?

K: I'm not a fan of donuts.

Too bad, because the donuts were phenomenal! They tasted like heaven and were Christmas themed. I personally liked the red one with green stripes. Though all of them tasted the same, it still was delicious. I had so much fun at this event. It was a great time to get to know others and make memories with families and friends. I saw a friend there, and she had her adorable baby. I personally enjoyed getting to see friends from my old school there – you can imagine how cool it was to see them! There were so many adorable kids.

Many thanks to all who made this event a success! Santa saw 104 children of all ages and the always fantastic Coffee Shop crew served 22 dozen donuts!



## From Susan Nagele

November 16, 2024  
nagelesusan@gmail.com

To all the good people of St. Patrick Parish,

I want to thank all of you for supporting Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MKLM) with donations in 2024. The parish gave \$1000, and the Women of St Patrick (WSP) contributed \$6000.

I was privileged to serve with Maryknoll Lay Missioners for 36 years and am now retired and living in Urbana with my mother. But we at MKLM are celebrating 50 years of

**Striving to create an inclusive and anti-racist world,  
living with those most excluded in society  
to transform unjust structures together.**

The parish donation will go to the general mission fund. The WSP donation will support the Restorative Justice Ministry of Marj Humphrey in northern Uganda. I know Marj well, having worked with her in Kenya and southern Sudan. In a recent newsletter Marj describes this new ministry that will begin in January 2025:



*Marj Humphrey*

The Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Team in Gulu, Northern Uganda, has invited me and another Maryknoll Lay Missioner, Joanne Blaney, to join them for a 3-month special training project. We will work with their local population to find alternatives to the violence that has ravaged their community for decades. The plan is for our team to train 80+ parish and community leaders in Restorative Justice, Conflict Resolution, and Trauma Healing skills. After “in class” training, we will travel to the various parishes



*Susan (left) and Marj (right), December 1994*

and communities, both rural and urban, and follow up with them, to aid in setting up their own programs. My personal role will focus on trauma and healing and participate in Restorative Justice training. Joanne is an international expert on Restorative Justice.

Our world seems to be teeming with wars and violence. But we can be hopeful, knowing that we have contributed to this restorative justice ministry. Each one of us, by committing to nonviolence in word and deed, can contribute to a more peaceful society.

And if you should hear the invitation of the Holy Spirit to join with MKLM in this outreach, please feel free to contact me.

Wishing you all a joyful Christmas season and the peace of Christ in the New Year! With gratitude as we all continue to follow the peaceful way of Jesus.

In Mission,

*Susan*

Susan Nagele  
Retired Maryknoll Lay Missioner

*To learn more about Marj, see [mklm.org/missioners/marj-humphrey-return-to-mission/](https://mklm.org/missioners/marj-humphrey-return-to-mission/). If you would like to know more about Maryknoll Lay Missioners, log onto the website [mklm.org](https://mklm.org) or call toll free 1-800-867-2980.*

## Making Room for Jesus with Matt Faley

On Wednesday evening, November 20, from 5 to 6 p.m. in St. Brigid Hall, St. Patrick's parishioners and friends were nourished and blessed with good food and warm fellowship at a potluck supper. With high spirits and full stomachs, we followed Fr. Anthony to the church for the singing, prayer, powerful testimony, and teaching of Matt Faley to help us prepare for Advent.

Matt is the Chief of Mission of the Catholic Diocese of Peoria. He is the



first person to hold this unique position, in which Matt works closely with Bishop Tylka "to make sure the mission of Jesus is integrated in all that is done in the Curia (diocesan offices) and that it is communicated to our pastoral leaders and laity across the diocese." Additionally, he is a gifted songwriter, singer, storyteller, and presenter, who is, with his wife Kara, the blessed parents of five children (9, 7, 6, 2, and an infant).

As we entered the church, we were greeted by the soft strumming of Matt's guitar, and the music quickly suggested peace and silence. Matt told us, "My focus is to help us all prepare to make room for the deep and abiding love of Jesus; to make room for his deep and abiding trust; to fall in love with the Lord who loves us." After a prayerful ballad, Matt began to tell us about his own journey with Christ.

Passionate joy and peace flowed from Matt as he vividly described memories like the time as a kinder-

gartner when he got off the school bus at the wrong stop and became hopelessly lost trying to walk home in an unfamiliar neighborhood. When he sat down on the sidewalk and began to cry, a car stopped and a man he did not know offered to help him. His fear made him ignore what he had been taught about never getting into a car with a stranger, so he did. As Matt said, "By the Grace of God and the help of my Guardian Angel," this story had a happy ending.

Matt shared how reflecting on this moment and other memories from his life has helped him realize how closely the Lord has always been with him. Nevertheless, as a young adult he was not making room for Jesus in his life as he entered college. However, it was at the University of Illinois where he first felt Christ really move in his life. Although his return to the Church was a slow process, he found himself sneaking away from friends to attend Mass at St. John's Newman Center. With the help of spiritual advisors, he discovered that "Christianity is the greatest adventure story ever told, and I wanted to live it." Weaving his own life story with the parables and teachings of Jesus, he encouraged us to do the same. "Jesus is the way, and he invites us into a sweet surrender. We cannot allow the world's distractions to deceive us into settling for a mediocre version of what Jesus is offering us."

Throughout his presentation, Matt sang songs (most of which he had written) and played his guitar to open our hearts more fully to the love of Jesus. He also led us in prayers such as "Here's My Heart, Lord." When he concluded his presentation with his own adaptation of "Ave Maria," there was a strong sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

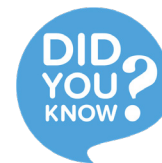
As we exited the church, Matt spoke with many parishioners. By opening our hearts and minds to receive the deep and abiding love of Jesus, Matt had indeed helped prepare us to live a fuller Advent.

## Squishy Christmas from page 1

He could have come as an adult, eloquent, persuasive, and ready to start his ministry. Instead, he chose to come as an infant, taking on all of human nature, our pains and pleasures, our sorrows and joys, our loneliness and our bonds of love. In doing so, he gave us a model of how to live our own lives. He could have chosen to leave the earth in glory before his passion and death. Instead, he embraced our humanity to the end and did all that was necessary to gain our salvation.

The baby with whom the Christmas season begins becomes the adult Jesus, teaching, healing, loving, correcting. As we hear the stories of Jesus calling people to him, we recognize his call to us. As we hear of his healing, we remember that he has healed us. As we hear him admonish others, we find the same need for correction in ourselves. As we hear how deeply he loved, we recall his love for us. As we see models of faithfulness, even if imperfect, in his followers, we dare to have faith and follow.

Seen this way, the Christmas season is the gateway to the entire liturgical year, and its work is the work of a lifetime. Maybe that's why the end of the season seems a little squishy. Beginning to know Jesus is the important thing.



Instead of trying to accommodate all of us for Mass in the parish center during the time needed to replaster and repaint

our church, we are encouraged to worship at St. John's. Why is this necessary? To reach the ceiling of the church to make these repairs, scaffolding is needed. And scaffolding requires that pews be removed during this operation. Under the circumstances it seemed best to try to find another place for us to gather for worship, and St. John's has space available while the university is not in session.

## “It is not enough to love the young; they must know that they are loved”

John Bosco, popularly called Don Bosco, was an Italian educator and writer who lived in the 19th century. He was born August 16, 1815, near Turin in Italy. He was a Roman Catholic priest who pioneered educating the poor, and he founded the Salesian order to do just that.

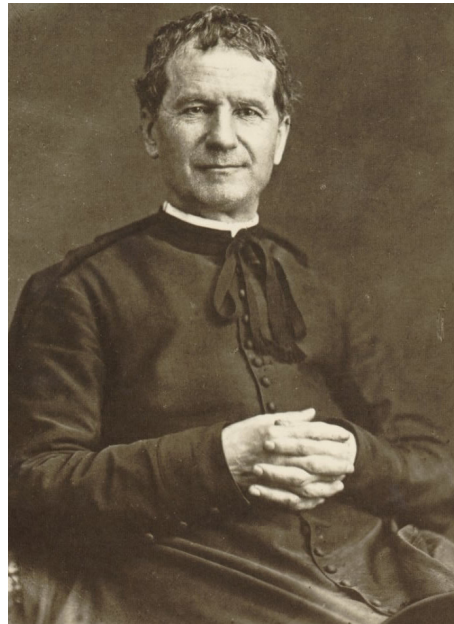
His father died when he was two years old, leaving his devout mother to raise him and his two elder brothers as farmers and shepherds. As a young boy, he saw the performance of a traveling circus troupe and began to teach himself magic tricks and acrobatics. He would gather groups of other children for magic shows and would recite a recent homily, prayer, or hymn at the end. He felt called to the priesthood but lacked the necessary education.

He left home at the age of 12 and worked odd jobs as a farm laborer until he came into the care of the future St. Joseph Cafasso, who helped to further his education at the seminary and taught him about the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales.

Bosco was ordained a priest in 1841 in Turin and, influenced by Cafasso, began to work to alleviate the plight of poor and neglected boys who came to seek employment in the city. Working in borrowed premises, Bosco provided boys with education, religious instruction, and recreation. Eventually he headed

a large establishment containing a grammar school, a technical school, and a church, all built through his efforts.

In Turin he and 22 companions founded the Society of St. Francis de



Sales (also known as the Salesians of Don Bosco) in 1859. Before his death on January 31, 1888, the Society had spread to England, France, Spain, and South America. With St. Mary Mazzarello he founded the Daughters of Our Lady Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco) in 1872, a congregation of nuns dedicated to similar work

among girls.

John Bosco's theory of education was a preventive system, rejecting corporal punishment. He advocated often receiving the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, and he combined catechetical training and fatherly guidance.

John Bosco educated the whole person, body and soul. He believed that Christ's love and our faith in that love should pervade everything we do – work, study, play. For John Bosco, being a Christian was a full-time effort, not limited to Mass on Sunday.

Pope John Paul II proclaimed him Father and Teacher of Youth. Saint John Bosco is patron saint of editors, educators, publishers, youth, apprentices, and magicians. We celebrate his feast day on January 31.

### *Vocation Prayer*

**Act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God.**

*Dear God, help me to know how best to bring justice and love to a world desperately in need of you. Strengthen me, strengthen all of us, with the courage and generosity and loving care that we need to respond to your call.*

## Help Needed!

*In Focus* has been going strong for 43 years now, and we can do this because of the many people who pitch in. We have three special needs right now:

**LAYOUT** A few times a year, scheduled in advance, you'd receive files of edited text, photos, and graphics. You'd have three days to do the layout and create a pdf using whatever publishing software you're already familiar with.

**WRITERS** Every couple of months, you'd receive a topic, knowledgeable contact people, and Web resources. You'd have about 10 days to write 400-600 words on a topic.

**PHOTO EDITOR** Photos give vibrancy to *In Focus*, but it takes time to select them each month. You'd read the draft of *In Focus* and select photos to help tell the story of our parish life.

Can you help? Contact Cathy Salika at [csalika@illinois.edu](mailto:csalika@illinois.edu).

**This soul  
that You have faceted  
and set  
in silver time,  
what token  
of what pledge is it I wear?  
When You have come  
to claim me  
for whatever You had  
planned,  
I hope You will be glad  
You placed it there.  
—Ruth R. Rains**



**Q: While visiting a friend recently, I noticed some letters and numbers**

**chalked above a doorway. She said it had to do with the Epiphany and the Three Kings. Can you explain?**

**A:** Many Catholics continue the ancient Catholic Epiphany practice of “chalking the doors” with the traditional yearly home blessing that accompanies it.

The practice is called “chalking the doors” because priests traditionally would bless the house and then use chalk to write above the main entrance the specific year, separated by the letters C, M, and B (e.g., 20 + C + M + B + 20, for the 2020 blessing). The inscription is applied as a prayer that Christ will bless homes so marked and that he will stay with those who dwell there and with any guest who may cross their threshold throughout the year.

The letters stand for the Latin blessing “Christus Mansionem Benedicat (May Christ bless this house),” as well as the legendary names for the three Magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, most often seen symbolically to represent Asia, Europe, and Africa, respectively.

As Scripture records, “The three, going into the house, saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11).



To this day, many Catholics in Latin American cultures call the

feast of the Epiphany Día de los Reyes (“Three Kings Day”) and, instead of Christmas day, delight in the “twelfth day of Christmas” as the day for exchanging gifts in imitation of the Magi who brought their gifts to the Lord Jesus.

## We are all of us refugees

When things have gotten beyond what I can bear, when I cannot fathom the next step, I need to take refuge in God. Does this make me a refugee?

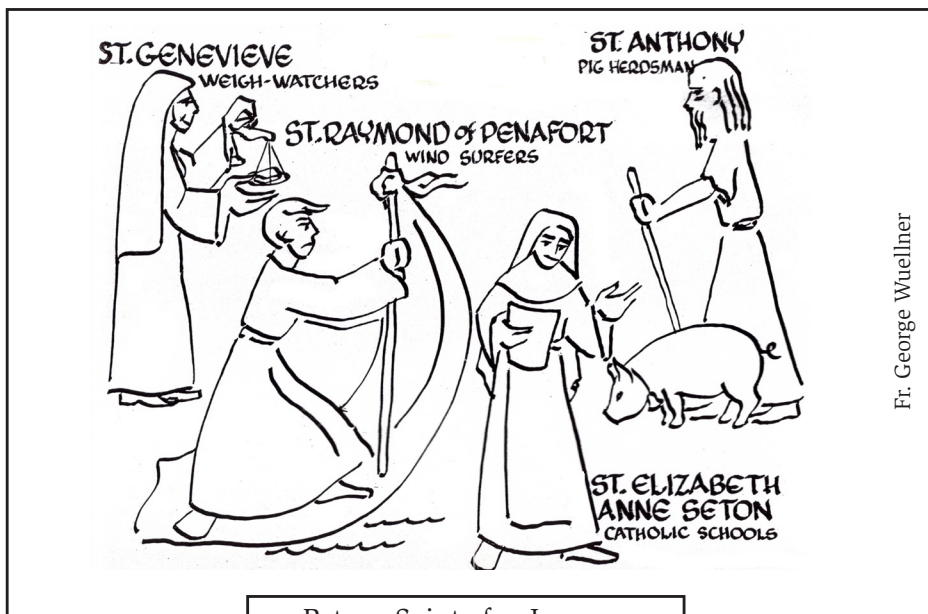
Many of us have been thinking of refugees of late. Many of us have also been talking about refugees of late. The very ones whose home lives presented sufficient danger that home was not refuge; it was terror. We may think and talk about refugees. But then, we may be refugees.

Surrounded by so many options, we may have no sense of what it means to take refuge. Meanwhile, scripture treats refugees often and consistently with mercy. But the Bible is about a lot of us who have very different experiences. Psalms are written from the perspective of those who need to pray. And that category is all-encompassing.

May our thoughts and our words about seeking God in the toughest of circumstances never center on ourselves first, but dwell on the neediest among us, those in danger of their lives. Mary and Joseph took their newborn son and fled for their lives to what they hoped would be a safe haven for their family. What can we provide for refugees of today who seek a safe haven for their children, for themselves?

Holy One, in you I take refuge. May someone else find refuge in me, too.

*In you, Lord, I have taken refuge:  
let me never be put to shame.  
In your righteousness,  
rescue me and deliver me;  
turn your ear to me and save me.  
Be my rock of refuge,  
to which I can always go.  
—Psalm 71:1-3*



Patron Saints for January

## Parish Council News



Members started their December meeting with a review of the parish movie nights, and it was decided that more help is needed. Three Council members offered their help with the next movie night, college students will be asked to help, and parents will be asked to organize the event.

The parish photo directories are expected to arrive by December 12. Those who didn't receive their photos were given contact information and asked to direct their concerns to the company. Upon arrival, directo-

ries will be set up in the Gathering Space for pickup.

The Council members are looking for ways to get information to parishioners about parish ministries and their mission, function, and needs. Initially they plan to do this by means of articles in the parish newsletter, *In Focus*.

Parishioner concerns addressed to the Council about parking were discussed. Mostly, these concerns dealt with overlap of Coffee Shop participants with incoming Mass-goers, for which no ready solution was apparent. To be continued.

Another issue under consideration is the election and seating of new Council members. The Council by-laws call for ten members, and the present membership is down to seven. Various strategies were discussed. In addition to the simple goal of filling vacancies, there is also a desire for diversification in age and ethnicity in Council membership.

A suggested schedule would have recruiting in May through *In Focus* and the bulletin, elections in June, and seating of new members in July. Procedures in past years offered some ideas for consideration, but no decisions were made.

Fr. Anthony is working on a video about the relocation of Masses in mid-January due to church repairs. Masses will be held and staffed by the Newman Center; cash donations will go to the Newman Center and checks to St. Patrick's; Mass intentions will be those already requested by St. Patrick's parishioners.

Are you interested in serving your parish in this significant way? Meetings are monthly, not permitted to go overtime, and the importance of feedback for the pastor cannot be overstated. Need more information? Talk with former Council president Mary Tate (217-367-2665 or email [mary.tate.stpaturbana.org](mailto:mary.tate.stpaturbana.org)). She will be happy to help.

## Thanksgiving baskets provide a feast

Every year on the weekend before Thanksgiving, St. Patrick's parishioners gather to help make that holiday bright for others by providing the makings of Thanksgiving dinner to our neighbors who might not otherwise have a plentiful Thanksgiving meal. That tradition continued this year. On that Friday, a few volunteers went to local grocery stores to pick up the food that had been ordered and bring it to the parish center. Many more came in on Saturday morning to assemble the foods into baskets (actually bags). Each bundle, which costs about \$35, contains all

the food needed for a Thanksgiving dinner, as well as a few household

distribution.

The majority of the baskets were picked up in person by guests of our SVDP Food Pantry, as well as other local residents. Some baskets were sent to St. Mary's for families in that parish. The rest were distributed by Sr. Karen, for people she assists at OSF. Any leftover items were added to the food pantry's stocks.

It was a wonderful weekend of giving. Many thanks to everyone who donated their money, their time, and/or their prayers for the success of this tradition.

What a great way to begin a season of love, caring, and thankfulness!



staples. In all, 200 bundles of food and frozen turkeys were readied for

## Here we come

Here we come to the table again.  
the holy table set for us unholy  
saints.

Here we come, the broken-hearted,  
the unemployed, the fearful ones,  
the guilty, the lonely, the anxious,  
the despairing, the grief-stricken ones.

Here we come, men and women,  
children and parents, poor and rich,  
rolling and walking, left and right,  
short and tall,  
every color and class imaginable.

Here we come, because we're hungry,  
used up, worn down, tired out,  
hung up, cast off, stressed out,  
turned off, put down, lost!

Here we are, eating again,  
without credentials, without money,  
without vouchers or coupons,  
just because you say we belong.

Here we go, full, from the table again,  
still unholy saints, but saints again alive,  
renewed in compassion and hope,  
taking bread with us for those who  
cannot come.



## St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

**St. Patrick's Parish In Focus**  
is published on the last weekend  
of the month in Urbana, Illinois.  
News items and information may be  
submitted by the first weekend of  
the month for an upcoming issue.  
Materials must include the name  
and telephone number of the person  
submitting them.

Please send news items to info-  
cusstpats@gmail.com. You may also  
send them to any Communications  
Committee member (listed with con-  
tact information below). All submis-  
sions are subject to review and/or  
editing by the committee and staff.  
Bylines are generally omitted.

### Editorial board:

Judy Fierke, 352-7670  
j-fierke@comcast.net

Elizabeth Hendricks, 328-2184  
elizabethwalkend@gmail.com

Mary Lou Menches, 344-1125  
mmenches@illinois.edu

Alia Rdissi, 281-382-1623  
aliardissi@yahoo.com

Cathy Salika, 367-7861  
csalika@illinois.edu

**Associates:** John Colombo, Ra-  
chael McMillan, Rick Partin, Shirley  
Splittstoesser, Jerry Walsh, and  
recent volunteers: Alex Bautista,  
Charlotte Kiesel, Stephen Odara,  
Laura Wright, Lena Wright, and Stan  
Yanchus.

**Articles, information, and photos**  
for this issue were provided by Sally  
Czapar, Elizabeth Hendricks, Mary  
Lou Menches, Alia Rdissi, Cathy  
Salika, Shirley Splittstoesser, Chris  
Whippo, Laura Wright, Lena Wright,  
and Stan Yanchus. Patron Saints by  
Fr. George Wuellner. This issue was  
edited by Rick Partin; page layout  
was prepared by John Colombo.

## Quick fixin's from the kitchen of . . . Mayo and David Ewanowski

### Grace's Rum Cake

- 1 pkg yellow cake mix (18.5 oz)
- 1 4-oz pkg instant vanilla pudding  
(Omit if cake mix contains pudding.)
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 c white rum + 1/2 c white rum (divided)
- 1/2 c + 1/8 c water (divided)
- 1/2 c vegetable oil
- 1 c sugar
- 1 stick butter or margarine



Grease bundt pan generously with solid shortening. Combine cake mix, pudding mix, eggs 1/2 c rum, 1/2 c water, and vegetable oil in large bowl. Mix at low speed until moistened. Beat 2 minutes at high speed. Pour into bundt pan and bake for 50 minutes at 350 degrees. About 10 minutes before cake is to be done, prepare glaze: Combine sugar, margarine, 1/2 cup rum, and 1/8 cup water in small saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. As soon as cake comes out of the oven, drizzle glaze evenly around the inside and outside surfaces of the cake. (You may have to gently pull the cake away from the pan with a knife while glazing.) When the cake is cool to the touch, remove it from the pan by placing a platter over the pan and turning it over onto the platter. If the cake sticks to the pan, heat it in a 300-degree oven for 5 minutes to loosen it.



Deadline for submis-  
sion of articles and  
news items for the  
next issue of *In Focus*  
(January) is **Sunday,**  
**January 5.**