

St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

www.stpaturbana.org

January 2026

Happy Quasquicentennial!

In 2026, St. Patrick's Parish will be celebrating its quasquicentennial, the 125th anniversary of its founding. On Sunday, June 30, 1901, founding pastor Fr. John H. Cannon spoke at



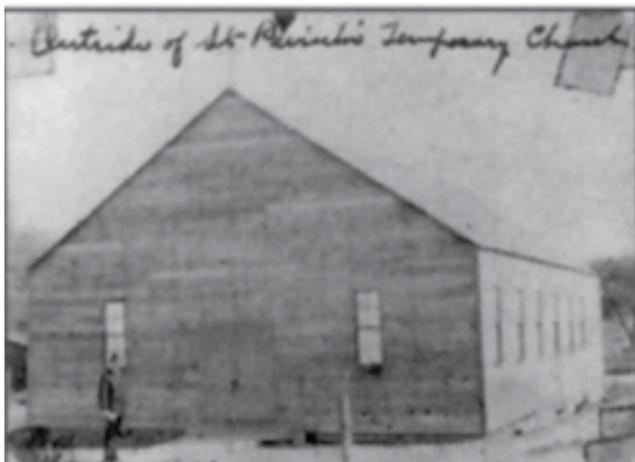
Masses at St. Mary Catholic Church in Champaign and announced that a new parish would be started in

Urbana, and that Mass would be given there the following Sunday. This might have seemed a trifle optimistic since there was no church, but apparently he knew what he was saying. The next day, the new parishioners started construction of a church in the tradition of a barn-raising, and 37 ½ hours later a simple wood frame church was complete. On Sunday, July 7, 1901, they gathered for Mass in the new parish, named for St. Patrick.

After that, it took almost two years to build the permanent brick church, which was dedicated on May 24, 1903, and for more than 100 years it sheltered and gave identity to the parish community. That building still serves as the western half of our worship space. In the coming year, we'll be celebrating the 123rd anniversary of that building.

On November 16, 2014, ground was broken for a large addition to the brick church, and on Dec. 9, 2015, the expanded church was rededicated. The first event of our 125th anniversary celebration was a Mass recalling the 10th anniversary of that rededication.

But our quasquicentennial is not a story about buildings.



See **Happy Quasquicentennial** on page 3

Ecumenical prayer vigil

by Megan Logsdon

January 22 marks the 53rd anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. It also marks the 37th year that St. Patrick's has participated in organizing the Pro-Life Ecumenical Prayer Vigil for our community. Many of you may remember Lu Pillar, a long-time member of St. Patrick's, who sought a meaningful way to mourn the babies whose lives were lost to abortion and ultimately spearheaded what we now know as the Pro-Life Ecumenical Prayer Vigil.



Lu's vision continues to guide how we plan the vigil today. The readings and intentions—shared by members and leaders from various churches in our community—reflect the ecumenical spirit she hoped to foster.

This year's vigil will be hosted by Savoy United Methodist Church on January 22 at 7 p.m. We know it may be a cold evening, but we would be grateful for your presence.

Was it really ten years ago? Yes!

The Angelus followed by singing “Oh God beyond all praising” opened Holy Mass celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the rededication of St. Patrick’s expanded church. The readings were the same as those used ten years ago at the dedication ceremony.

The celebrants were Fr. Anthony Co, Fr. Joe Hogan, Fr. John Pham, and Fr. Joseph Baker, all of whom have been a part of the St. Patrick’s church expansion.



Fr. Hogan began the homily with a light anecdote. He said, “I’m still alive!” He went on to explain that it is a factoid among pastors that when a church undergoes a major expansion project such as St. Patrick’s did ten years ago, half of the pastors are dead within ten years, due to stress. He concluded, “It is a joy to be before

you tonight...alive...upright.”

Fr. Hogan shared memories about the building project. The experts that guided the Capital Campaign did not expect the wave of generous gifts from the people of St. Patrick’s. Generally, about a quarter of the people of a parish donate to these projects; St. Patrick’s had a 70% response.

He pointed to the former sanctuary and said, “I love the old sanctuary, that it’s a new prayer space for the People of God. I love how the banners were created. There were hundreds of photos of people’s hands, feet, and eyes; of items that people donated, i.e., fabrics, rosaries, books, crosses, heirlooms that go back five generations. They were all incorporated into the design of the saints that are on the banners. When you look at the saints, they are a collage from the people of St. Pat’s.” He continued, “Look at St. Francis. He is holding a nail that came from the original 1901 church of St. Patrick’s. That nail symbolizes not only our church, but Christ’s suffering for us.”

Above the crucifix behind the altar are painted 42 stars that represent the 42 families who built the original St. Patrick’s church. Fr. Hogan said, “They are up there looking down and praying for us.”

Fr. Hogan gave tribute to previous pastors Fr. Doug Hennessy and Fr. George Remm. “The dream of expanding the worship space was strengthened by

them.” He described the dedication ceremony and seeing the staff and all those on the Building Committee, the Music Committee, and the Art and Environment Committee in the pews smiling from ear to ear. “I wasn’t sure if they were smiling because of the ceremony or because they were finally finished with the project.” He added that the pews were filled with parishioners smiling from ear to ear as well.

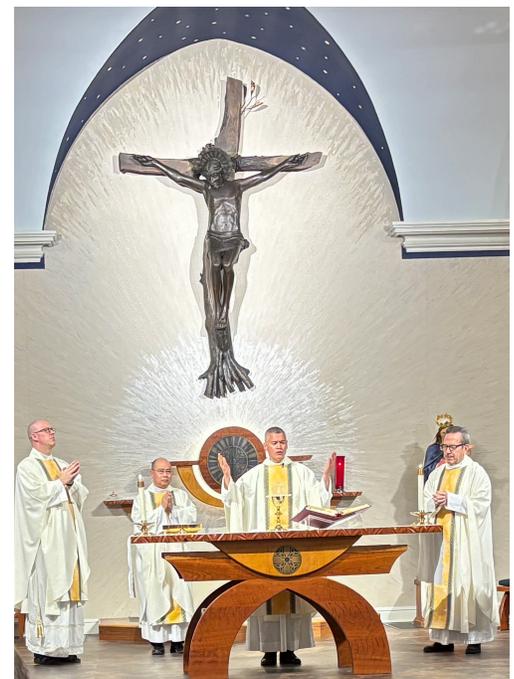
Mass closed with the choir leading singing the same song which closed the dedication ceremony ten years ago, “Holy God we praise thy name.”



A potluck buffet and movie (“The Shepherd”), organized by Patricia Fowler, Jon McCoy, and Mary Tate, followed Mass.

The movie “The Shepherd” was filmed before “The Chosen” was made. “The Shepherd” was filmed by Dallas Jenkins for his church, Harvest Bible Chapel in Elgin, for their Christmas Eve service. The film was shot behind the barn on a friend’s farm in Marengo, Ill. The film went viral and led to a massive crowdfunding campaign allowing Jenkins to develop “The Chosen”.

After the movie, the staff treated parishioners to ice cream with lots of toppings and a discussion of the movie.



Happy Quascentennial!

from page 1

It's a story about people. Countless thousands of people have gathered here to learn about their faith, to live it out, and to pass it on. They weathered two world wars and many smaller conflicts. They dealt with the Spanish flu in 1918 and the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020. They persisted in difficult economic times and times of prosperity. And through it all, they brought their children to be baptized and educated, they encountered God in sacrament, word, and worship, they committed themselves to marriage, and committed their deceased loved ones to the care of God.

They also lived their life as a community. How many bake sales do you think there were in 125 years? How many building-and-grounds cleanup days? How many classes, retreats, and bible studies? How many committee and Parish Council meetings to discuss ways to meet new needs? How many mailings, bulletins, and newsletters? How many meals were provided to the needy? How many celebrations? How many volunteers?

When you come to St. Patrick's, you reap the benefit of 125 years of caring, faithful work. You receive a tradition of vibrant worship. You enjoy the rhythm of the liturgical year and its reflections in parish customs and celebrations. You make use of facilities that are safe and well maintained. You find a home among people of God who care deeply about their Catholic faith and one another.



The story of our quascentennial is also a story about the work of God. The presence of God is our only reason for existing. The love of God gathers us together so that we can support one another in faith. The fidelity of God is with us in every difficulty that we face. The tender care of God is expressed in the care that we show for one another and reflect to the larger community around us.

Enjoy the celebrations of the coming year. Give thanks to God for the blessings that you receive at St. Patrick's. Give thanks also to the volunteers and the staff who make good things happen. And do what you can to make sure that the blessings that you receive here are available to people in future generations.



Thanksgiving baskets provided a feast for many

The 2025 Thanksgiving basket distribution took place on the cold but sunny Saturday before Thanksgiving. Volunteers worked together to pack 150 bags with the makings of a Thanksgiving dinner. Then a team took their positions in the parking lot. People in cars and on foot were directed where to line up. Once they were checked in, they proceeded to tables where they received a bag of food and a frozen turkey and pie.

At first, turnout was low. At 11:10 a.m., there were still 30 turkeys left and no folks in line. Then just as the official ending time of 11:30 came, there was suddenly a rush of latecomers. In the end, only 5 turkeys and 4 bags were left (someone turned down a turkey); those were given to St. Mary's, which was very happy to have them!

Many thanks to all who gave their money, time, and support to this annual project!



Fr. Doug, a man for all seasons

by Tom Kacich

There is no question that the big heart of Monsignor Doug Hennessy – better known as Father Doug – belonged to Bloomington, Ill.



It was there that he was born in 1938, there that he grew up with his two sisters on the west side of town, there that he was a star athlete and scholar at the old Trinity Grade and High Schools, there that he worked for eight summers at the Kennett Murray Stock Yards with his father Harry, there that he served for the last time as an active priest at Holy Trinity Church, retiring in 2013, and from there that his funeral was on Nov. 17, 2025. His earthly body is buried in nearby Normal at Holy Cross Cemetery, along with his parents.

But Father Doug had a profound effect at St. Patrick's in his nine years (1977-1986) in Urbana. He frequently told his old softball and golf buddies from St. Patrick's that "you had me in my best years as a priest. I think I peaked there."

Perhaps, but he was a good, holy, and scholarly man, God's servant, wherever he went in the Diocese of Peoria or in the world. He also served parishes in Peoria, Macomb, and Danville, taught at the North American College in Rome, and drove his Prius all over the diocese in later years, celebrating Mass and covering for his fellow priests.

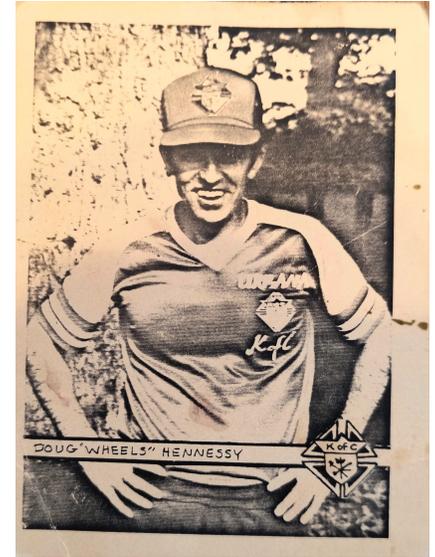
He really was, however, a vigorous and dynamic leader at St. Patrick's. He oversaw the renovation of the church, including the installation of parishioner Nick Britsky's inspiring "Rising Christ" sculpture over the altar; started the Christ Renews His Parish program; strengthened parish education offerings; worked closely with an empowered parish council; and began groups focused on young adults and divorced, separated, and widowed Catholics. He was co-pastor with Father George Dorsey from 1977 to 1981, and from 1982 to 1986 he was assisted by Monsignor Paul Kinder, who had grown up in St. Patrick's and ordained in 1935.

Father Doug had a remarkable ability to remember not just an individual's name, but the rest of the family members as well. He modestly attributed the quality to "word association," but parishioners suspected some greater power at work.

He was in his 40s for most of his time at St. Patrick's, but Father Hennessy marveled parishioners and teammates alike with his talent on the softball field. He played shortstop – a key defensive position – for the Knights of Columbus team in the Urbana Park District Sunday night recreational league. Most of his teammates were younger than Father Doug and had families. But he was the star and the star attraction. A KC's softball game meant crowds of young families and other parishioners, most of whom came

to see the smooth-fielding pastor. After many games Father Doug and families would go to Monical's for pizza and beer.

A cheeky newspaper created



for Father Doug's departure to Rome in 1986 noted that his best year on the softball field was in 1985 when he was named the team's most valuable player, with a batting average of .450 and only two errors in 18 games.

Even nearly 40 years after he left St. Patrick's, Father Doug remained close to many parishioners, serving as a spiritual director and guide, a prayer partner, a dinner companion, and a golf partner. He came back frequently to celebrate daily or Sunday Mass or to visit with the sick.

Although small in stature he had a booming voice that he used effectively in homilies on topics as disparate as the Sunday readings to social action and community needs. In his later years in his hometown, he championed immigrant rights. "God's Word tells us every person without exception has inherent human dignity and is worthy of respect,"

See **Fr. Doug** on page 5

Fr. Doug

from page 4

Father Doug told the McLean County Museum of History, which earlier this year honored him as one of three local History Makers.

Coincidentally he also was featured in this year's video for the Peoria Diocese Annual Stewardship Appeal. He talked about places he had served, schools he attended, and his 50 years as an active priest.

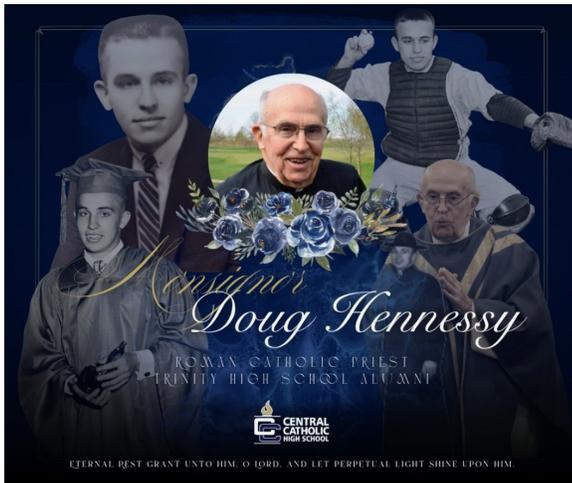
"I'm very grateful to the diocese," he said. "I always felt very supported as a priest. I really felt we were in this together, not just the priests but the priests and the people together were the church."

At the luncheon after Father Doug's funeral Mass, his nephew Marty Griffin told the gathering how shortly before the incident that led to his death, Father Hennessy was asked for advice by a young man considering the priesthood.

He paused before noting that he had been a priest for 62 years, that they were good years and that it had been a great joy and honor to serve God's people and that he would recommend the priesthood to anyone considering it.

Father Joe Hogan, also a former pastor at St. Patrick's, delivered the homily at Father Doug's funeral Mass. The two were close in recent years, often going to Mass together and to breakfast afterward.

"Father Doug, a gentleman, a priest, a pastor, and a prophet – a man for all seasons – really completed what he needed to do," said Father Hogan. "Father Doug saw that. He saw that in his life. He believed that he had completed everything. And so, I think he would want us to be at peace. And I think he would want us to live as he did: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God."



(To read more about Father Doug, see his interview in the September 2002 issue of *In Focus*, available on the parish website.)

Parish Council News

At their November meeting Council members were updated by the ad hoc committee for the 125th Anniversary of St. Patrick's Parish. Bishop Tylka will be here to celebrate with us on Saturday, July 18th, at the 4 p.m. Mass.



The ad hoc committee has communicated with some parish groups (ABLE, Congolese, Filipinos, Catholic Young Professionals, and Deaf ministry) to get a sense of parish growth within the last 25 years as the basis for an anniversary article for *In Focus*. In a brief discussion of the anniversary booklet planned, consideration was given to its size and binding.

The Council held its first meeting with a parish ministry group, the Catholic Young Professionals (CYP), represented by Austin Coulter. The CYP consists of grad students, 25-35 years of age, from St. Patrick's, Holy Cross, and St. Matthew's. They gather at each of the parishes in turn for holy hours, sometimes followed by a happy Hour, and on the first Saturdays of a month they gather for a potluck.

The young adult members from St. Patrick's often get together for coffee and donuts after the 8 a.m. Sunday Mass and have agreed to serve and clean up on behalf of the Coffee Shop once a month. They also meet regularly for Bible study.

When asked how our parish could help this ministry, Austin suggested a one-day retreat combining prayer and quiet time for meditation, possibly during Advent or Lent, designed for their respective age group.

Barb Wysocki mentioned that she'd recently read a book by Msgr. Philip Halfacre, titled *Genuine Friendship: The Foundation for All Personal Relationships, Including Marriage and the Relationship with God*. After briefly describing the book, she suggested that the book or its author might be a source for a multi-generational Lenten retreat. Such a retreat, she said, might help us to explore how St. Patrick's diverse cultures and varied age groups could form friendships for future growth. Discussion on this subject is to be continued.

Your contribution to discussions such as these as a member of the Parish Council would be a service to the parish and our pastor. Members meet monthly for a prescribed length of time, serving as liaisons between the Council and parishioners for the well-being of the parish. You can do this – you have much to draw on for this ministry! And there are vacancies to fill. . . .

Silent Night / Stille Nacht

One of the most beloved of Christmas carols is “Silent Night,” a simple and inspiring hymn from the nineteenth century with an interesting and well-documented history.

Joseph Mohr (1792-1848) wrote the original text in German in 1816 as a poem. Mohr was a young Roman Catholic priest serving as an assistant priest in Mariapfarr in Lungau, a part of Salzburg, Austria. The times were difficult as Napoleon had recently been defeated and many experienced hardship as power shifted. The original poem has six stanzas and focused more on devotion and salvation than the current three-stanza English translation we sing in America.

Mohr transferred to the Nicola Kirche or Church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf, another small city in the Salzburg region of Austria, in 1817, where he met Franz Xaver Gruber, a schoolteacher and the organist for the church. On very short notice, Mohr asked Gruber to compose a simple melody for his poem for voices and guitar. Several legends surround this story, suggesting that the organ may have been broken, the organ was just unreliable, or that Mohr himself played guitar and wished to play the tune. Gruber composed the music in a few hours and on December 24, 1818. Several copies of the manuscript still exist in Salzburg. Here is a sample of the first verse in German beside a literal translation:

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schlaft; einsam wach!
Nur das traute heilige Paar,
Holder Knab im lockigten Haar,
Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh!

Silent night! Holy night!
All are sleeping, alone and awake:
Only the intimate holy pair,
Lovely boy with curly hair.
Sleep in heavenly peace!
Sleep in heavenly peace!

In 1839, a group of singers known as the Rainer Family or the Tyrolese Minstrels came to America and toured New York, where they performed “Stille Nacht” on Christmas Eve at Trinity Church in New York City. Translations into English followed, the most commonly known by John Freeman Young. The song was published as “Silent night! Holy night!” in a volume of Christmas carols.

The three stanzas we commonly sing are a significant reversal of Mohr’s original lyrics. The current order uses his stanzas 1, 6, and 2 and omits stanzas 3, 4, and 5. Mohr’s concluding lines are “*Jesus der Retter ist da!*” or “Jesus the Savior is here!” The emphasis on salvation strongly concludes the original work.

For further study of this beloved carol, extensive documentation may be found at the website for the *Stille Nacht Gesellschaft*. Visiting Salzburg to tour the sites and museums connected to this hymn and the wonderful musical tradition of this city may be the best option!



In November, three adults were confirmed at St. Patrick. Front row, left to right, are Kerry Pokorny, Madison O’Dell, and Chioma Ugwu. Let’s give them a warm welcome to the Church and to our parish family!

Advent retreat awakens souls

On Saturday, Dec. 6, parishioners from Saint Patrick's, Saint Matthew's, Holy Cross, and St. Joseph's (Manteno), along with several Sisters of the Holy Heart of Mary and the Mercy Affiliate group members, assembled in St. Brigid Hall for the "Awake, O Sleeper" Advent Retreat.

During introductions everyone was asked to share why they had come to this silent retreat and to express something they hoped to receive by participating. Responses varied but the hopes "to deepen my personal relationship with Jesus" and "to gain better insights into what the Lord is calling me to do" were almost universal.

After prayer and being "awakened" by spirit-filled music, artwork, and reflection prayer stations, and being provided with an instructive booklet, participants were encouraged to find a quiet space where each could devote time to prayerful meditation, contemplation, and journaling. A line from Richard Rohr's Trinity Prayer poem, "Don't be afraid of this silence, which is where God seems to be," guided the seekers on their way.



Retreat facilitator Susan Amann with Sr. Karen Carlson and Sr. Charlene Cesario.

At noon everyone returned to St. Brigid Hall for lunch, fellowship, and spirited discussion. After lunch participants returned to their quiet spaces to continue their silent personal reflections. Later in the afternoon, the group reassembled again in St. Brigid Hall for a closing prayer and sharing.

The thoughtful testimonies and prayers shared at the closing gave witness to how the participants were

deeply awakened by the Lord's presence during this silent retreat. When asked about the Advent Retreat, St. Patrick's parishioner Fran Hacker spoke for many when she said, "I believe the silence and time to spend quietly helped me to focus on where I need to improve in my life and to where the Lord is leading me."

To those who may be considering a Spiritual Retreat in the future, Fran added, "I would suggest that you take a chance; it will enrich your lives and is a time to meet other people who are also interested in their faith."



Q: What is the Christian Unity Octave?

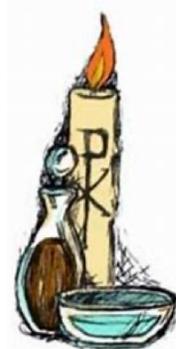
A: The Christian Unity Octave, traditionally observed from January 18 to 25 – the octave of St. Peter and St.

Paul – is a week of prayer for Christian unity. Its observance in the U.S. dates back more than one hundred years but follows centuries-old traditions of prayer and hymns that originated in the ancient Armenian monasteries and churches, some dating to the fourth century.

The theme of the 2026 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes from the Letter to the Ephesians: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling." (Eph 4:4) The theme, prayers, and reflections were prepared by an ecumenical group coordinated by the Inter-Church Relations' Department of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The 2026 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity offers us an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide.

Baptisms at St. Patrick's



We welcome into our faith community **Liam Elliot Mineros** and **Oliver Alexis Mineros-Bruno**, baptized November 9, whose parents are Veronica del Caremen Bruno Hernandez and Nestor Alexis Henriquez.

We welcome into our faith community **Evelyn Timpone**, baptized December 19, whose parents are Natalie and Alex Kopco.

Let us celebrate Baptism with **Liam Elliot Mineros, Oliver Alexis Mineros-Bruno, and Evelyn Timpone**. Baptism is the sacrament by which we become adopted sons and daughters of God.



Quick Fixin's from the kitchen of . . .

Terry Beaudoin



Mom's Orange French Toast

8 eggs
 1/2 c orange liqueur (Triple Sec, Grand Marnier, etc.)
 1/2 c milk
 1/4 c sugar
 1/2 t vanilla
 1/2 t salt
 zest of one orange
 9 (1"-thick) slices French bread
 3-4 T butter
 powdered sugar
 maple syrup

Beat eggs in a large bowl. Add orange juice, orange liqueur, milk, sugar, vanilla, salt, and orange zest; mix well. Dip bread into egg mixture, turning to coat all surfaces. Transfer to a 9" x 13" baking pan in a single layer. Pour any remaining egg mixture over the top. Cover and refrigerate overnight (liquid will be absorbed). When ready to cook, melt butter in a large skillet over medium to medium-high heat. Add bread slices in batches and cook until browned, about 8 minutes. Turn and continue cooking until browned, about 8 minutes. Arrange bread slices on a platter and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve immediately, passing butter and maple syrup.

Do you have a favorite quick and easy recipe to share? Maybe something your family and friends really enjoy? Please send it to Mary Lou Menches (mmenches@illinois.edu) – our readers are always looking for that great addition to a meal!



We must have been nice this year because Santa and Mrs. Clause returned to St. Patrick on December 7 for another Donuts with Santa.

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 infocusstpats@gmail.com. You may also send them to any Communications Committee member (see below). All submissions are subject to review and/or editing by the committee and staff. Bylines are generally omitted.

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Deadline for submission of articles and news items for the next issue of *In Focus* (February) is **Sunday, January 11.**