

N.A.P.P.



Volume 61

October 2024

No. 2

President's column: Fr. Allen Corrigan

NAPP annual gathering combines history and fellowship in the Texas Hill Country

Dear Members,

Thank you very much for the high honor of being elected as president of the National Association of Priest Pilots. I hope that I will be able to serve faithfully. I am looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

For my first duty as president, I would like to thank Phil Gibbs for his fine leadership for the past two years. Thank you, Phil! I would also like to thank Phil, his brother Ron and sister-in-law Jeri for making all the arrangements for the 2024 Convocation. Thanks also to Tom Enwright, who had a part in



Nancy, our wine expert at William Chris Vineyards, pours a sample for Fr. Phil Gibbs.



the planning and execution of the event.

From what I heard, there seemed to be unanimous agreement that the convention site, The Inn on Barons Creek, was outstanding. The schedule for both days was very well thought out. All the venues were meaningful.

We were immersed in many fascinating aspects of American history, not to mention viticulture and Hereford husbandry. What a delightful variety of interests! And both the Johnson Ranch and Pacific War Museum included the topic of aviation, which was very much appreciated by everyone in the group.

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Texas provides warm welcome for NAPP

Sunny skies, high temperatures in the 90s and warm Texas hospitality greeted 15 members of the National Association of Priest Pilots for the 2024 Convention and Annual Meeting in Fredericksburg, Texas.

Four NAPP aircraft carrying 10 members arrived at Gillespie County Airport (T82) on Monday, September 16. Others arrived by car or van on Monday and Tuesday.

Fr. Phil Gibbs, NAPP president, enlisted the help of his brother Ron and sister-in-law Jeri in preparing for the convention — everything from shopping and setting up the hospitality room, ordering pizza for Monday

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Great job, Phil, Ron, Jeri and Tom!

I very much appreciated the background information supplied by Jeri regarding Texas wine, and Nancy’s expertise during the wine tasting was very impressive. At another venue, the bourbon tasting was an unexpected, additional pleasure.

Since the death of my closest priest friend, John Vrana, a little more than two years ago, I had been hoping to go on a long road trip. We had driven to Florida and back nine times, until his illness and COVID interrupted our plans. I had been thinking about a drive to the Pacific coast, but since the Fredericksburg site was announced last year, I knew that this was my chance to get long drive out of my system. So, the 3,250-mile

trip took me through Columbus, Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville, Little Rock, Austin, Fredericksburg, Fort Worth, Dallas, Oklahoma City, St. Louis, Indianapolis and more.

A highlight of my return trip was stopping in Springfield, Ohio, on Sunday for lunch at Rose Goute Creole Restaurant, the heart of the Haitian community there. The restaurant

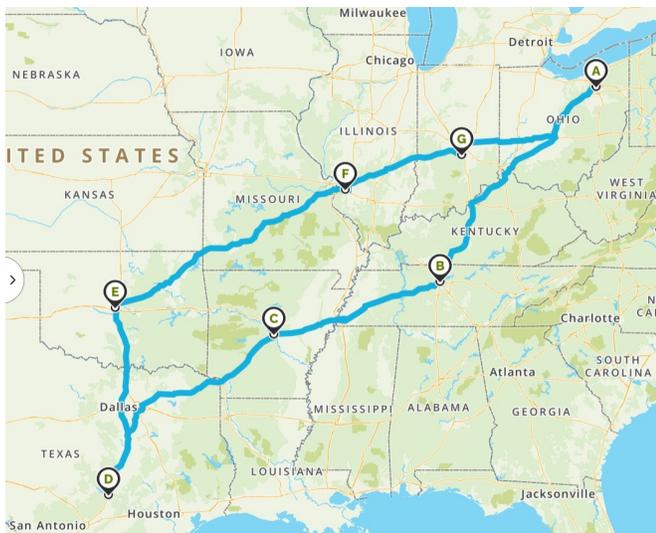


was teeming with patrons from all over the state, there to offer support for this vulnerable population. It was a very moving experience.

In closing, I would like to remind everyone of the special PayPal button on our website, priestpilots.org, which allows for additional contributions. We have agreed to fund our interests in Alaska and Africa once again with grants of \$1,500 each. The “Donate” button provides members and others with the opportunity to help us with our philanthropic efforts. Please keep this in mind as you wish.

Thank you again for this very high honor.

Sincerely,
Allen Corrigan
N6172D



The National Association of Priest Pilots newsletter is published online six times per year (August, October, December, February, April, June). Fiscal year begins July 1. Website: priestpilots.org

Articles, news notes and photos can be sent to Tom Enwright, napp.editor@gmail.com. Deadline for the December edition is November 30.

NAPP Leadership Team

- President: Fr. Allen Corrigan
- 1st VP: Fr. Edward Moran 2nd VP: Fr. Bill Menzel
- Secretary: Fr. Alex Nevitt
- Treasurer & Newsletter Editor: Tom Enwright
- Regional Directors**
- East: Fr. Alex Nevitt Midwest: Fr. Gene Murray

2025 NAPP Dues – U.S. \$30.00

Fiscal year began July 1, 2024

Use this form or use PayPal (go to priestpilots.org and click **Pay Now**).

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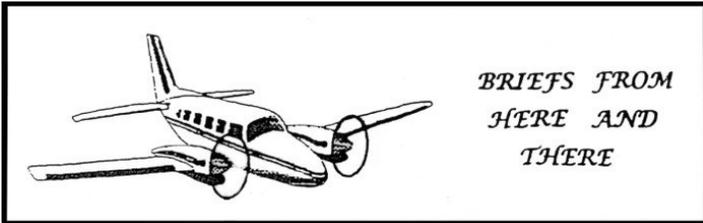
PHONE: _____

Member category: Charter Regular Associate

Make check payable to NAPP and mail to: Tom Enwright, Treasurer, 419 Chestnut St., Sauk City, WI 53583

In addition to the \$30 annual dues, we encourage members to make a separate donation to the **NAPP Missionary Gift Fund**, which will be used to support the organization’s charitable grants. Donations can be sent to the same address or you can use PayPal. Go to priestpilots.org and click on the **Donate** button.





EAA Chapter 706 in Wisconsin Rapids recently held a reception to celebrate two EAA Ray Aviation Scholars who were mentored by Fr. Bill Menzel, an NAPP member. “These young pilots completed an application, essay and interview process before being selected. Once selected, they completed all FAA and scholarship requirements to earn their Private Pilot Certificate,” according to an August post on the chapter’s Facebook page. One of the young pilots is pursuing a career in commercial aviation and the other is studying aviation management.

[Learn more about the EAA Ray Aviation Scholarship program here.](#)



Hurricane Helene: Associate member George Gratton reports his community in Savannah, Georgia, was hit hard by Hurricane Helene, resulting in outages for electricity, water and gas. He says he’s OK. “Now I have everything back but the gas/hot water,” he wrote on October 1. “Warning about gas generators: Do not operate a generator in the garage. Don’t put the generator in the garage or right next to a structure, even after it is turned off. They are hot and can catch or start a fire. I know, because mine did!”

Reminder to pay your dues: Your fiscal 2025 dues are payable now, if you haven’t already paid. Please send in your \$30 to remain a member in good standing, and additional donations are welcome. The new fiscal year began July 1. **See the dues form on Page 2.**

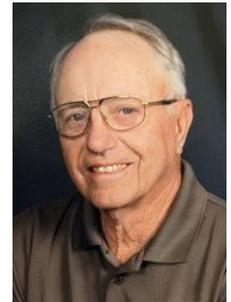
Obituary planning: Members who are making advance funeral arrangements are encouraged to include NAPP in the list to be notified by the family or funeral director. Email: napp.editor@gmail.com.

Additional ways to support NAPP: Please remember NAPP in your retirement and estate plans. Those who need to take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from a qualified retirement account can designate NAPP for a financial gift. Also, please remember NAPP in your will. Email: napp.editor@gmail.com.

Remembering Paul Murray

Fr. Gene shares the story of an emotional farewell to a special Cub

Editor’s note: Paul Murray, brother of Fr. Gene Murray, died in Storm Lake, Iowa, on August 12, 2024, at the age of 89. ([Obituary is linked here.](#)) Paul was a former associate member of NAPP. In the following tribute, Fr. Gene tells how he and Paul shared a mutual fascination with aviation.



By Fr. Gene Murray

My brother Paul had been a pilot for about 35 years and a tail-dragger pilot for perhaps 25 years. It was around the year 2000 that he decided to sell the Cessna 172 and go to flying the 1952 Super Cub, 143T, that he had just rebuilt. Owning and flying the Super Cub was a passionate love affair that endured until his death. One could say that he loved to tango with 143 Tango.

It was in 2012 that the building itch struck again; he then located a partially completed Cub kit that he finished. He delighted in flying both of them, and he would often fly into the Cherokee Airport for a taco lunch. We would while away the afternoons doing minor maintenance on the Cubs and his wife Martha would call me because he didn’t often answer his phone, and say, “Tell Paul to come home, we have bridge tonight.” Such were the days around the airport when we would be so absorbed that we would lose track of time.

The Cub had an unmistakably distinctive sound, and when I heard him coming, it was always a delight to see it land. Watching the Cub land never got old as I

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evening and planning a wonderful driving tour of the Texas Hill Country on Tuesday. Highlights included visits to the LBJ Ranch and a winery (with tastings and lunch) and live music in a rustic outdoor setting at Luckenbach Texas.

The Inn on Barons Creek in the downtown area was a great setting for convention headquarters, with comfortable accommodations and a delicious breakfast selection.

On Wednesday morning, we toured the [National Museum of the Pacific War](#) in downtown Fredericksburg. After lunch, Fr. Phil and six other priests concelebrated Mass at St. Mary's Church, followed by our meeting in the parish center.

Fr. Allen Corrigan was elected president, succeeding Fr. Phil who decided not to seek a second two-year term. Fr. Edward Moran was elected first vice president, succeeding Fr. Nick Radloff, who completed his second term and decided not to seek any other office. Thanks, Fr. Phil, for your leadership these past two years!

Members approved grants of \$1,500 each for Flying Medical Service in Tanzania and the Diocese of Fairbanks for aviation-related expenses. Checks will be issued in January.

The 2025 convention will be in Mason City, Iowa, with arrivals on Tuesday, July 15, and departures on Friday, July 18. This will be a variation from our recent tradition of meeting in September. The rationale is that this week in July coincides with a big aviation gathering in Mason City in advance of EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh (July 21-25).

Fr. Nick Radloff, who pro-

posed Mason City as the convention site, said Doug Rozendaal, a warbird pilot, has offered NAPP the use of his hangar. Doug was the next-door neighbor of the late Msgr. John Hemann, a longtime leader of NAPP. Another draw is NAPP attendees will enjoy the Third Thursday BBQ (otherwise known as the "burger burn") at the airport. The convention will be co-hosted by Fr. Nick and Mike Makelbust.

Following the meeting, there was time for a bit of a rest at the hotel before heading to Catfish Haven for our group dinner.



Fr. Phil Gibbs, NAPP president, presides at the NAPP Mass at St. Mary's Church in Fredericksburg.

Fr. Nick Radloff introduced our guest speaker, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Hinsch, who at one time was Fr. Nick's commander. Fr. Nick was a navigator before entering the seminary. Michael currently is a first officer with American Airlines.

General aviation departures were early on Thursday morning. Fr. Miles Barrett was our excellent chauffeur, shuttling members to the various events in a van he rented at San Antonio airport. Thanks, Fr. Miles!

Convention photos provided by Fr. Miles Barrett, Fr. Allen Corrigan and Tom Enwright



Group photo at the NAPP banquet —Kneeling: Fr. Miles Barrett, Fr. John Schmitz, Fr. Gene Murray, Mike Makelbust. Standing, left to right: Fr. John Swing, George Gratton, guest speaker Michael Hinsch, Fr. Nick Radloff, Fr. Christopher Hoffmann, Tom Enwright, Fr. Bill Menzel, Fr. Allen Corrigan, Fr. Alex Nevitt, Fr. Edward Moran, Fr. Bob Lacey, Fr. Phil Gibbs

'These things we do so others may live,' says retired commander

Retired Lt. Col. Michael Hinsch has many stories to tell about his flight experiences in the Air Force. Speaking to a gathering of the National Association of Priest Pilots on September 18 in Fredericksburg, Texas, he focused on the relationship between aviation and faith in God.

Michael was introduced by Fr. Nick Radloff, who at one time served as a navigator for the HC-130 aircraft piloted by Michael.

Since retiring from the Air Force in 2014, Michael has been a pilot for AirMed International, a corporate pilot, and an instructor for FlightSafety International. He currently is a first officer with American Airlines.



“God gave us time to get over that cloud and ridge.”

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Hinsch

crew tried to find a contract aircraft that had crashed. Michael piloted the four-engine turboprop 200 feet above the ground over a canyon, toppling out of a cloud and hopping over a ridge. “God gave us time to get over that cloud and ridge,” he said

Eventually, Michael’s crew spotted the wreckage so a recovery team could be sent.

Pilots in the Christian life. “Pilots are rule followers.” There are rules set by God for our lives and rules set by aviation authorities. Those rules are in place for a reason. “Jesus is our parachute and our salvation,” he said.

Michael closed with another story from Afghanistan. It was 2011 during his third tour of duty in that war-torn country. A soldier’s life was in danger and Michael’s crew was assigned to drop a piece of advanced medical equipment and a supply of blood in a mountain canyon during a blizzard. Nick Radloff was the navigator on that flight; his pilots were Gene and Max. As commander, Michael was in the operations center helping coordinate the mission.

The crew calculated a flight path by factoring aircraft speed, wind and weight of the payload, ultimately determining when and where to drop the load. On top of that, they had to figure out how to package the payload to withstand a parachute landing.

The mission was a success. Michael’s crew was given an A+ score for accuracy, and the soldier’s life was saved.

“These things we do so others may live.”

He flew combat search-and-rescue missions for 14 of his 23 years in the Air Force. He finished his Air Force career as chief of combat operations. He was a key facilitator for



Left to right: LeighAnn Hinsch, wife of guest speaker Michael Hinsch; Fr. Nick Radloff; Ron and Jeri Gibbs.

eight USSOUTHCOM partner engagements for personnel recovery, coordinating civil/military operations in Central/South America. He led the world’s largest personnel recovery exercise ANGEL THUNDER in 2013-14 and PANAMAX 2013, working with six allies. He also supervised two personnel recovery operations in South America.

Speaking to NAPP members and guests, Michael focused on the missions he used to lead in the Air Force, and he drew a connection between being a pilot and loving God. He touched on three key points.

Pilots have a unique view of God’s creation. “I try never to lose that wonder,” whether it’s looking down at the beauty of the earth or gazing at cloud formations.

The fragility of life. Pilots can find themselves in dangerous situations due to carelessness, incapacity or neglect. “We train because we know the consequences,” he said.

Michael shared a story about a search-and-rescue mission he led in the mountains of Afghanistan as the

Scenes from the 2024 NAPP Convention in Fredericksburg, Texas



Pizza and good conversation on Monday evening after a day of traveling.



Docents give a preview of what to see at the National Museum of the Pacific War.



Fr. Allen Corrigan's panoramic view of St. Mary's Church before Mass.



Ron and Jeri Gibbs go over our driving tour of the LBJ Ranch.



A cutout of President Lyndon B. Johnson and a portrait of First Lady Ladybird Johnson at the LBJ National Historic Park.



This is a reconstruction of LBJ's boyhood home.



The Show Barn continues to serve as the center for present-day ranching operations.



Brothers Ron and Phil Gibbs enjoy the music at Luckenbach Texas.



Free from the duties of president, Fr. Phil preflights his Cessna 182 for the trip home.

Bishop Steve relies on commercial air services to reach Alaskan parishes

Editor's note: Fr. Jim Falsey, a member of NAPP, is mentioned in an Alaskan travel journal written by Bishop Steven J. Maekawa, O.P., of the Diocese of Fairbanks. The diocese has granted NAPP permission to republish a portion of the journal. At the Annual Meeting in September, NAPP members voted to provide the diocese a \$1,500 grant, payable in January, for aviation-related expenses. The diocese no longer has its own aircraft, but instead relies on commercial air services to reach remote villages.

*Read about the diocesan history of aviation in the [Fall/School 2020](#) edition of *The Alaskan Shepherd*.*

Long after our supporters in the lower 48 states had started enjoying sunshine, blue skies, and spring flowers, Bishop Steve was still navigating snowstorms, frozen rivers, and darkness to reach the faithful in northern Alaska. Here, he shares some of the most memorable moments from his travels during the first half of 2024.

March 8-9: Aniak

I made my first trip to Aniak, a small village on the Kuskokwim River in central Alaska. Aniak has a unique history: originally settled by the Yup'it, the village was abandoned by the time Russian fur traders arrived in the early 1800s. The settlement didn't become permanent until the early 1900s, when rumors of gold fueled a stampede to the area. An enterprising homesteader named Tom Johnson set up a store and post office at the old Aniak site to serve local gold miners and that brought prospectors and indigenous people back to the village. Today, Aniak is so proud of its racially diverse heritage that its high school students voted to name their sports teams the "Halfbreeds" in the 1970s.

I had flown (on a commercial carrier) into Aniak with Fr. Jim Falsey, a "retired" 78-year-old priest originally from Michigan. Fr. Falsey now lives in Anchorage but flies (commercial) into the Diocese of Fairbanks three weekends a month to provide the Mass and sacraments to our most underserved village churches. After landing, Fr. Jim and I couldn't find a ride to St. Theresa's, which was about a mile and a half away from the airport. Unfazed, Fr. Jim said, "Let's start walking; someone will pick us up!" Sure enough, 200 yards down the road, an ATV side-by-side pulled up, and a villager offered us a lift to the church. We piled our



Bishop Steve Maekawa flies commercial to reach remote villages in Alaska. This flight was on a Cessna 207 Skywagon (Photo from the Diocese of Fairbanks)

bags in the back, sat on the luggage, and hung on to enjoy the ride. After settling in, we celebrated the Saturday vigil Mass and met with many members of the village.

March 10: Kalskag

This morning, parishioners drove us 35 miles down the "ice road" — the frozen Kuskokwim River — to the village of Kalskag. The radio in the truck was turned to 640AM KYUK out of Nome, and one of the songs we heard was a beautiful version of "How Great Thou Art" in Yup'ik. The weather was terrific, and we were treated to sunshine, blue skies, and a comfortable zero degrees. Even at that temperature, frost formed on the inside of the truck windows.

We arrived at St. Theresa's in Kalskag to learn that only one of the four heaters in the church was working, so people were still dressed in coats and hats to stay warm during the Mass. It's common for our older churches and rectories to be difficult to heat. To save money, many were built with minimal insulation and after decades of use, their aged boilers struggle against the arctic temperatures.

This past winter, Fr. Thin Van Tran traveled to Koyukuk for a funeral, but had to wait an extra two days for the priest residence to heat up from 40 below zero. Despite the cool temperatures at St. Theresa's, however, we received a warm welcome in Kalskag and nearly 40 people showed up to celebrate Mass. Afterwards, Fr. Jim and I enjoyed a wonderful potluck, with many people expressing their thanks for our visit.

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March 14-16: Bethel

This time, Fr. Jim and I flew (commercial) into Bethel, a community of nearly 6,500 residents and one of the largest in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region. The small city is one of the most ethnically diverse in bush Alaska, with 40% of the population being non-Native people from all over the world. Interestingly, Bethel has a single, 10-mile paved road, which supports a robust taxicab industry. With nearly 100 drivers, the town has more cab drivers per capita than any other city in the United States.

I was in Bethel to celebrate Mass and distribute the consecrated oils used for sacraments throughout the year. The liturgy was attended by parish representatives from nearly all of our 24 churches in the Y-K

Delta region, who renewed their commitment to serve the Church. It was beautiful seeing so many people publicly commit to another year of leading their faith communities as Communion service presiders, parish administrators, or Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist (or all three). While some villages are comprised almost entirely of Catholics, others have just a handful of faithful to keep the church going between priest visits. With priests only able to visit every few weeks, our churches would be closed without the unwavering dedication of these Catholics.

The full article referencing Fr. Falsey's work in northern Alaska can be found in the Fall 2024 issue of The Alaskan Shepherd newsletter, published by the Diocese of Fairbanks (dioceseoffairbanks.org/alaskan-shepherd).

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watched him settle to the earth gentle as a feather. He had truly mastered flying and landing that yellow Cub with a black stripe down its side. Watching him land is a bit of nostalgia that will not be forgotten as long as I live.

A very poignant occurrence happened in early June at the Cherokee flight breakfast. Paul had slipped out of the house and driven over to Cherokee in his pickup by himself, a distance of about 20 miles. I was surprised to find him sitting in my hangar. He came to say goodbye to his Cub. After eating a pancake, we

walked over to his hangar and in his weakened condition, he picked up an old towel, which he always kept there, and started to wipe the dust off 143 Tango.

I grabbed a towel and joined him, and we dusted it off together. It was a sad farewell to an important part of his life that I was fortunate to share with him. Fittingly enough for we had shared in rebuild-

ing that Cub and flown in it together, that we should perform this farewell ritual together. That's how he was able to say goodbye to his "sixth child," 143T. They took the keys away from him shortly after that for he became too weak to drive.

None of his five children fly, so it will be a sad day

I grabbed a towel and joined him, and we dusted it off together. It was a sad farewell to an important part of his life that I was fortunate to share with him.



Paul Murray with the Cessna 172 that he used to own. "It was around the year 2000 that he decided to sell the Cessna 172 and go to flying the 1952 Super Cub, 143T, that he had just rebuilt," says his brother, Fr. Gene Murray.

when that plane flies off into the sunset to a new owner. I suppose that will be my last farewell to Paul. Perhaps the Good Lord will see fit in eternity to allow us to while away a little time messing around in a Cub.

Paul was a lifelong member of St. Mary Parish in Storm Lake. Married to his wife Martha for 60 years, they had five children and 13 grandchildren. Their children all graduated from St. Mary's High School and went on to post-high school education. Their Catholic faith was an important part of their lives together and they passed that value on to their family. Paul took up flying in his late 50s and it became a passion until he died when he traded in his earthly wings for gossamer wings not subject to corrosion or annual inspection.