

Inspirational Walk

La Grange 'Prayer Trail' a quiet haven for the public to enjoy

Woodcarver Abbott has added his touch along the way

By Helen E. McKinney
Contributing Writer

LA GRANGE, Ky. (November 2009) – Several years ago, La Grange Presbyterian Church sponsored local Boy Scout Troop 200 in an effort to help it earn its Eagle Scout badges. The scouts created a 1 1/2 mile trail that circles the 20-acre church property, and local chainsaw artist Tony Abbott contributed wood carvings to adorn the trail.

“The sincere ‘Thank You’ I get from people who have walked this keeps me going and makes me think this is the right thing to do,” said Abbott. Abbott first met the church pastor, Al Earley, during an Angel Food Ministries event at the church.

Abbott created the inspirational wood carvings that line what came to be known as the church’s Prayer Trail in an effort to give back to the church that had helped him so much.

Abbott is the only artist whose artwork graces the Prayer Trail. Pastor Earley said the artwork is beautiful. “Some of the artwork is in the form of benches,” he said. Carved Bibles add spiritual detail to each station on the trail.

There are six stations containing the carvings where individuals can stop and pray or contemplate their problems or blessings. Each station has a focus: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession and communion. These stations bring out different aspects of prayer that Earley has pointed out to his congregation.

“His artwork is very intriguing,” said Earley, who has pastored the church for the last 12 years. “Tony has his own way of interpreting prayer through art.”

“I can see carvings in pieces of wood and in trees that need to be removed,” said Abbott. From the wood, Abbott carves with his hands anything his imagination can fathom.



Photo by Helen McKinney

**La Grange Presbyterian Church
pastor Al Earley poses beside a sign
marking the beginning of the
churches' Prayer Trail.**

When Abbott first approached him with the idea, Earley said he didn't understand what Abbott was doing. But over time, he has come to see clearly what Abbott had in mind. "The congregation really enjoys it," he said.

Abbott, 57, used a chainsaw and various other smaller tools to create the wood carvings for the church. He can often be found carving his stoic artwork from his home in La Grange at the corner of Hwy 42 and Hwy. 53. Originally from Kansas, Abbott has carved walking sticks, totem poles, furniture, angels, eagles, mermaids and Derby hats. He has carvings on display at Cunningham's in Prospect, the Cornerstone Restaurant in Buckner, and a Revolutionary War memorial site in Skylight, along Hwy. 42. Abbott has completed many private wood carving commissions and was one of the featured artists during the Original Oldham Studio Tour & Art Sale, held in September.

Abbott likes to show off his carvings at events where people gather for fun and entertainment. These venues include antique car shows, farmers markets and the Mellwood Art Center in Louisville.

The Prayer Trail is open to the public. The church is located at 1901 Prestwick Dr., and residents of the adjoining subdivision, Prestwick Estates, often use the trail.

"The grounds of the church are open to everyone," said Earley.

• *For more information about the Prayer Trail, contact Pastor Al Earley or the La Grange Presbyterian Church at (502) 222-8973.*



Photo by Helen McKinney

Tony Abbott has pieces of his woodcarved art at various places in Oldham County and downtown Louisville.

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