

Pope Francis dies at 88

BY NICOLE WINFIELD
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis, history’s first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, died on Monday, April 21. He was 88.

The Vatican said Francis died of a stroke that put him into a coma and led to heart failure.

Bells tolled in Catholic churches from his native Argentina to the Philippines and across Rome as news spread around the world.

“At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church,” Cardinal Kevin Farrell said from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta, where Francis lived.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy.

He made his last public appearance on Easter Sunday — a day before his death — to bless thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square, drawing wild cheers

and applause. Beforehand, he met U.S. Vice President JD Vance. Francis performed the blessing from the same loggia where he was introduced on March 13, 2013, as the 266th pope.

World leaders on Monday extolled Francis’ commitment to the marginalized. French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country is largely Catholic, wrote on X: “From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. ... May this hope forever outlast him.”

Flags flew at half-staff in Italy, and crowds gathered in St. Peter’s Square. When the great bells of St. Peter’s Basilica began tolling, tourists stopped in their tracks to record the moment on their phones.

Francis’ death sets off a weekslong process of allowing the faithful to pay their final respects, first for Vatican officials in the Santa Marta chapel and then in St. Peter’s for the general public, followed by a funeral and a conclave to elect a new pope.

In his final will, Francis confirmed he will be buried in St. Mary Major Basilica in a simple underground tomb with only “Franciscus” written on it. The basilica, which sits outside the Vatican, is home to Francis’ favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, to whom Francis was particularly devoted.

Audit reports two infractions in 2023

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

The audit of the 2023 financial statement of LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf has been released, with Kentucky Auditor Allison Ball finding two infractions.

Funded through statutory fees collected in conjunction with the office’s duties, Metcalf is responsible for collecting certain taxes, issuing licenses, maintaining county records and providing other services. She has held the office since 2021.

The first infraction, a repeat finding from the 2021 and 2022 audits, states the Clerk’s Office does not have adequate segregation of duties over receipts, disbursements and reconciliations.

“The county clerk collects cash; has access to all cash; issues receipts; prepares daily checkout sheets, reports, and deposit tickets; and reconciles daily, weekly, and monthly reports,” the audit states. “In addition, the county clerk prepares and signs checks, posts to the

receipts and disbursements ledgers, reconciles the bank accounts, and prepares quarterly financial reports.”

Although Metcalf explained the condition is a result of a limited budget, which restricts the number of employees she can hire, the auditor states the issue “resulted in the county clerk’s financial statement being materially misstated due to multiple posting errors to the ledgers” and “underpayments to the state and taxing districts for calendar year 2023.” They also note that, if adequate segregation is not feasible due to a lack of staff, Rhonda can implement and document compensating controls to mitigate the control deficiency to ensure accurate financial reporting.

The second finding states that the clerk’s fourth-quarter financial report and ledgers were materially misstated, requiring the reclassifications of more than \$75,000 and adjustments of more than \$87,000.

“The reclassifications and errors resulted from a lack of oversight over the financial recording process and

preparation of the fourth quarter report,” the audit states. “These deficiencies resulted in inaccurate financial reporting to external agencies, such as the Department for Local Government and the fiscal court. Further, the lack of oversight could result in the undetected misappropriation of assets.”

Although it is noted that the clerk’s office is still adapting to using a new software program for her receipts and disbursements ledgers, and Metcalf states, “all disbursements were paid correctly,” the auditor recommended the clerk’s office “implement stronger internal controls over the financial reporting process to ensure amounts reported on the quarterly reports are accurate.”

In its entirety, the state-law-required report determined that the 2023 financial statement of the LaRue County Clerk presents fairly in accordance with the regulatory basis of accounting generally accepted in Kentucky. The audit report can be found at auditor.ky.gov.

PROJECT

FROM PAGE A1

by having a safe, affordable place for their children.

The project could also potentially serve the community at large. Although the project’s priority would be staff and student families, Warren said the district may explore expanding access to community families, depending on “capacity, licensing, and staffing.”

One of the main requirements for the Childcare Project is a suitable physical location. According to Warren, this need arises from:

- Licensing require-

ments for space, safety standards, and outdoor play areas; the district would like to have enough room to accommodate the staff and community needs while also earning enough money so the childcare center pays for itself.

- The desire to avoid overcrowding existing school facilities.

- Creating a purpose-built or appropriately renovated environment specifically designed for early childhood development.

“We are currently considering potential properties, but no final decisions have been made,” she said. “Ideally, the location would be centrally accessible and meet all the criteria necessary for a licensed

childcare center. This may involve acquiring new property or renovating existing space, if feasible.”

“There have been plans to place it at Abraham Lincoln Elementary, but ideally, it would be better to find a property that would allow us to serve more families so that it will not only be a service to the staff but also the community.”

Funding is another key factor when determining the feasibility of this project. According to Warren, the district has looked closely at the budget and financial impact the undertaking would have. And, while there would be initial start-up costs, LCS expects the project to cost the district very lit-

tle, if anything at all.

“Staff members would still be required to pay tuition, much like any other childcare center,” Warren said. “Any additional monies made by the childcare center would be placed back into the general fund to pay back any monies that were used for start-up.”

The LaRue County Board of Education was slated to discuss the Childcare Project and a Childcare Director Job Description at its regularly scheduled Monday, April 21 meeting. An overview of the discussion and overall meeting will be published in the April 30 edition of *The LaRue County Herald News*.

2025 Chamber Award nominations now open

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

Nominations for the 2025 LaRue County Chamber of Commerce Awards are now open. Categories include Outstanding Citizen of the Year, Outstanding Business/Professional Person and the Spirit Award.

The Outstanding Citizen Award is presented annually to a LaRue County individual, selected on the basis of significant contributions of service, devotion, involvement and responsibility to civic and service organizations, family and church. The recipient does not have to be a member of the chamber and recognition may be based on involvement during the award year alone or for cumulative contributions over a longer period of time.

The Outstanding Business/Professional Person is presented to a chamber member on the basis of their ability to organize and/or maintain a successful, growing business or professional capacity, active participation and responsibility in community affairs, unselfishness in opening and/or promoting avenues

of growth and development for other individuals or businesses and devotion to the family unit.

The Spirit Award is presented annually to a specific individual, group or organization in recognition of significant contributions that have improved the life and spirit of the community. Recipients are selected on the basis of involvement or accomplishment of an idea, goal or project, a good deed or selflessness in the face of emergency and may be based on events during the award year alone or for cumulative efforts.

Nominations of those who have made a difference in the community can be sent to info@laruecountychamber.org; ensure the category, the person’s name, occupation/employer and the reason for the nomination is included. Deadline for nominations is Tuesday, May 13. Winners will be announced at the LaRue County Chamber of Commerce’s Annual Dinner Award Ceremony & Leadership LaRue Graduation scheduled for Tuesday, June 24 at the LaRue County Extension Office.

TAX

FROM PAGE A1

fountains, roadside stands and street vendors. The tax does not apply to school cafeterias, food vending machines or non-profit organizations.

The city has identified 14 brick-and-mortar locations that will be affected by the tax: Kayla’s Fill-Up Station, The 16th, Laha’s Red Castle, Yummy Japan, Little Mexico, Lee’s Famous Recipe Chicken, El Acapulco, Burger King, McDonald’s, Hardee’s, Hometown Pizza, Subway, Taco Bell and Vibe Coffee. The tax will also apply to food trucks and gas stations that meet the criteria, though specific locations have not been identified as of press time.

The new tax is possible through KRS 91A.400, which authorizes cities to enact a levy and tax all retail sales of restaurants doing business within city limits. Citing the need for “continued funding for the promotion of tourist activity,” Hodgenville has chosen to implement the maximum 3% rate.

All revenue garnered from the tax will be maintained by the City of Hodgenville in a special fund and disbursed to the Hod-

genville Tourism & Convention Commission monthly; the city will receive 5% of all tax collections as reimbursement for the cost of collec-

SEE TAX/PAGE A8

EXCEL

FROM PAGE A1

have given her the pieces of her plane along the way.

“This community, this district and the people within it, you were building me before I even knew what I was going to become,” Dangerfield said, who also is a LaRue County High School graduate.

She went on to thank several who “handed her the pieces of my plane,” to include her former teachers, coaches, club sponsors and administrators to her current colleagues, some of which overlapped, to her mentors, friends and family, along with her students.

“You are the heart of all this. I wouldn’t be here without you,” Dangerfield said to the eighth-grade students gathered at LaRue County High School to watch the ceremony. “I show up every day because of you and you are the reason I love my job. My greatest goal is that you leave my class-

room every day knowing that you are seen, you are valued and that you are loved. You are why I continue building my plane.”

Sharing thoughts from comments submitted from students on behalf of Dangerfield, Grace McKenna of WHAS said students appreciated Dangerfield’s interactive lessons and guided support and that she can “always be counted on to get the job done because of her unmatched commitment and accountability.”

“Her classroom is a place to learn and is a haven of calm and respect where even the most troubled students feel valuable and capable,” McKenna read from the statements. “She sets firm by fair expectations and gives her students opportunities to succeed and grace when they stumble.”

In sharing a particularly impactful lesson in which students studied the county’s Abraham Lincoln connection and heritage, made a website and presented it to adults, middle school librarian Abby Lee said those moments embodied the purpose of teaching.

“Her impact ripples far

beyond lesson plans,” Lee said, adding she hopes that one day her child will have Dangerfield as a teacher. “She empowers students, she lifts up their

colleagues and she quietly, humbly makes magic happen. She doesn’t ask for recognition, so today, it brings me a lot of joy to give that to her.”



From understanding the nuances of wills and trusts to navigating long-term care options, we are your trusted resource for all things related to securing your family’s future.

Please join us for the next
FREE, ESTATE PLANNING WORKSHOP
MAY 6, 10:30AM
RESERVE YOUR SPOT!
(270) 982-2883
WWW.HUMPHRIESLAW.ORG

LICENSED IN KENTUCKY
108 E. POPLAR ST, ELIZABETHTOWN, KY
THIS IS AN ADVERTISEMENT

Looking for the Medicare plan that is right for you??

As your local, licensed agent, I can help you:

- Compare plans available in your area
- Learn about important enrollment deadlines
- Complete paperwork and enroll

Call Heather today!
(270) 358-0122
Carter Insurance Agency
2883 Campbellsville Road
Hodgenville, KY 42748
Carterinsurance42748@outlook.com

Call the above number to speak with a licensed agent. Not connected with or endorsed by any government of the Federal Medicare Program.

Quarry Hill Monuments

101Abe’s Way,
Hodgenville, KY (270) 358-0037
Manager: Kaye Skaggs

Linwood, KY (270) 528-5654
Managers: Brian Shelton & Brent Shelton

Proudly Serving LaRue, Hardin & Surrounding Counties For 35 Years!

