

A MEMBER OF THE FLOCK

Barney the Texas stray becomes a church dog

Barney had a badly injured right eye and was covered in cockleburs when we rescued him in Amarillo, TX late last year. He lost the eye but gained an adoptive family in Arizona. Now he spends much of his time in church.

He likes going to church, especially since his new mom is The Rev. Sandra Chilese, vicar of The Episcopal Church of Sts. Philip & James in Morenci, a remote copper mining town. It's a small congregation, 35 to 40 people. To the children she's "Pastor Sandy"; to the adults she's just Sandy.

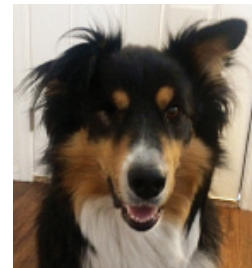
She brings Barney, age 3, to church for her weekday office hours. "He greets people like he would if they came to the house," she says. "He loves getting petted and loved on." And when he attended Ash Wednesday services (in her office), he didn't utter a sound.

Though Barney is growing into his role as a church dog, he's still an energetic youngster who can't always be trusted to stay put. During the week, he's free to roam the church



and parish hall, but Sandy is careful to put a sign on the door: "Barney's visiting today. Please use your key or knock! Thank you!"

She'd like to train him to participate in the Blessing of the Animals service in October,



Here's Barney at his church, with a sign posted to alert parishioners, and at home in Morenci.

"other than just getting a blessing." And someday, perhaps the former stray can be the church's Sunday greeter. "Give them love, let them know they are safe and they will amaze you," Sandy wrote. Amen to that.

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