

February 2006

## OLOL Community Meetings – Your Turn

The OLOL Planning Team and Parish Councils will be talking and listening at two planned meetings to keep parishioners informed of the process and configurations to date:

**Sunday, March 12, 3 p.m. at St. Michael in Penn Yan.**

**Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m. at St. Januarius in Naples**

Your knowledge, feedback and understanding of the pastoral planning recommendations are vital to the success and future of a united ministry and of a single OLOL Parish. Please come, learn and help us communicate.

## Mass Schedules to Hold at Least a Year

While changes are inevitable down the road when Bishop Matthew implements the recommended configuration, NO CURRENT PROPOSAL calls for any parish closing in the coming year, nor for any change in the Mass schedule. This does not preclude a particular community recommending a change in their schedule. No change is anticipated at this point.

## Editor's Box

*Planning Primer* is an occasional, as needed newsletter for the six parishes of Our Lady of the Lakes. It is a full Planning Team effort to reach out to all members of OLOL and get their feedback, as well as openly share in the process and recommendations that will be made.

Jane Monagan  
Bob Coombs  
Monica Marsh  
Gloria Long  
Carleen Pierce

Tim Hebding  
Judy Willing  
Jacqueline Leysath  
Sue Campbell

Staff: Fr. Bob Ring, Cris Share Wensel  
Diocesan liaison: Karen Rinefield  
Communications: Carol Worth

## A Summary and Overview



*The Holy Spirit stained glass window at St. Patrick's altar in Prattsburg.*

With guidance from prayer, our own and from others praying for the group, the Planning Team has been down a rather long and winding road to make the best recommendations possible to the three Pastoral Councils. This Planning Primer is our effort to share the process and outcome with all parishioners of Our Lady of the Lakes six Churches. We've devoted space here to;

- A brief history of the process
- Financial realities
- Lessons Learned from neighboring parishes that merged
- A view of the original seven configurations we began with
- Two possible configurations for one parish, recommendations after Parish Council input
- Questions and Answers that were addressed along the path
- Constraints within which we had to plan
- A Summary of last summer's survey responses
- A process timeline of where we've been and where we're going

Since the Planning Team members have lived the process over months and years, and had time to absorb the shifts of mind and heart, you are not expected to grasp it all in one day. The Planning Primer is only a beginning.

In the next several weeks Fr. Bob Ring will be sharing much of this as he ministers to each parish and during weekend Masses. After Mass there will be an opportunity to have a question and answer period at the church with members of the Planning Team.

OLOL Community meetings will follow in March; times are posted in the column to the left.

# Survey Summary on Planning Questions



Half of all six parishes feel strongly a single parish would provide for the advantage of a priest focus, greater ministry and less administration.

We are treating the survey as the “voice of our parishioners.” But, as we’ve said from the beginning, the survey was to understand perceptions, wishes, hopes and fears. It was never intended to be a ‘vote’ in the traditional sense. The Planning Team and Councils have other obligations and directives to consider. Survey responses will help us determine the “how” of the proposed changes.

**On Change:** OLOL parishioners do have a great appreciation that change is coming, they are supportive of current leadership and they want a process that is sensitive, patient and collaborative. They need more communication about a vision for the future.

The survey questions that were analyzed for responses centered around four areas of interest to planning; reactions to forming one OLOL Parish, readiness to embracing change, perceptions of a sense of OLOL community, and reactions to losing a Sunday Eucharist within a given parish.

**Query:** *I believe that implementing a single OLOL parish council, with representatives from each community, would effectively replace our 3 current councils.*

	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Simple Ave.	26%	10%
<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
17%	24%	23%

While the simple observation shows that a quarter agree, a quarter don't know and half disagree, it must be remembered that in terms of absolute numbers, 115 of 363 respondents, or 32% supported the idea of moving to one council, with 26% not knowing. This, in spite of the fact that people are usually more resistant to change before it happens and more flexible after it happens.

**Query:** *I believe my parish council should continue as its own parish council, but should send a delegate to an OLOL parish council.*

The results for this question were similar to the previous question. Again, it was not a surprise to see a desire to keep the Councils as they are and an inclination to resist change. Other parishes have demonstrated this tendency before merging Councils.

**Query:** *I know that some change is inevitable, but is necessary for a strong future for our churches.*

	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Strgly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strgly Disagree</b>
<u>4 Simple Ave.</u>	12%	13%	62%	9%	4%
<u>St Januarius</u>	18%	18%	51%	8%	4%
<u>St. Michael</u>	12%	23%	62%	1%	1%

Parishioners acknowledge here a strong agreement, 85% of all respondents that change is coming and it is necessary.

In general, the survey responses and comments related to planning showed that parishioners are concerned with losing local involvement, in making sure that ministry happens at the local level, and that ‘brick and mortar’ activities and some community specific events happen locally.

Of special note is that several responses in the comment section demonstrated a high level of concern over communicating proposed changes and changes. Everyone wants to know what's going on and when.

**\*\*Note of Thanks:** The tremendous amount of dedication, resources and time devoted to this survey by Diane Harris' group must be acknowledged and appreciated. The Planning Team especially wants to thank Diane for the valuable tools that came out of the survey responses.

For those interested in reading the Survey Report as related to planning, which is a 97 page professional report on the questions and responses, please contact a member of your parish council for the on-line link. There is also a report on the Social Justice Ministry work and, shortly, there will be a report on the Liturgy questions and responses.

## Financial Survival: With or Without Fewer Priests



*While an anticipated reduction in priests available to serve the OLOL communities may be in the offing, the Planning Team also had to take a hard look at the financial realities of trying to support six parishes and their various facilities.*

To accurately assess income and expenses for the entire cluster, a consolidated cash flow summary was prepared for the Fiscal Year end June 30, 2005 and the first six months of Fiscal 2006 which ended on 12/31/05. The first step to common sizing the information was to include weekly offerings and all other income which is not considered as “one time events” i.e. bequests and gifts. Conversely, expenses were analyzed to insure that we did not include one time events. For the most part this did not present a problem as non operating expenses associated with repairs or “capital improvements” are typically recorded as non operating expenses.

	Januarius	Mary	Patrick	Andrew	Michael	Theresa	Total
Income	126,912	35,262	40,437	27,438	318,160	36,411	584,620
Expense	<u>139,131</u>	<u>36,863</u>	<u>26,756</u>	<u>27,432</u>	<u>274,806</u>	<u>39,562</u>	<u>544,550</u>
Net	(12,219)	(1,601)	13,681	6	43,354	(3,151)	40,070

For the fiscal year end 6/30/05 the six parishes within the cluster recorded to revenue of \$544, 620 which was offset by total expenses of \$544,550 resulting in net cash flow of \$40,070. It is important to note that of the six parishes only two parishes (St. Michael and St. Patrick) had sustainable cash flow positions. Three of the remaining parishes reported negative cash flow.

	Januarius	Mary	Patrick	Andrew	Michael	Theresa	Total
Income	66,912	19,684	20,984	13,931	170,935	17,817	311,626
Expense	<u>74,055</u>	<u>18,589</u>	<u>13,075</u>	<u>15,816</u>	<u>142,116</u>	<u>20,491</u>	<u>284,142</u>
Net	(7,103)	1,095	7,909	(562)	28,819	(2,674)	27,484

For the first six months of Fiscal 2006 (12/31/05), the six parishes reported total revenue of \$311,626 against total expenses of \$284,142 resulting in positive cash flow of \$27,484. Once again, only St. Michael and St. Patrick were reporting sustainable cash flow. Of the remaining parishes, one parish was marginally in the black and three reported losses ranging from \$562 - \$7,103.

A consistent theme has been developing over the past few years, for the most part; attendance and collections have been going down while expenses have been going up. Unfortunately, the expenses have been those which are outside of our immediate control and include such things as utilities, insurance and benefits for our employees. For the past two years the Diocese of Rochester has provided guidance in budget preparations, noting that utilities would be increasing by 8-10%, benefits would increase by 12% and insurance would **once again** increase by **30%**. We have already received word that we should expect the same for Fiscal 2007 (July 1, 2006/June 30, 2007).

Regardless of the ultimate configuration, we will continue to bear the expenses associated with our real estate i.e. utilities and insurance as well as maintaining a staff to support the cluster and based on our current spending this would approximate \$568,284 for fiscal 2006 which ends on 6/30/2006.

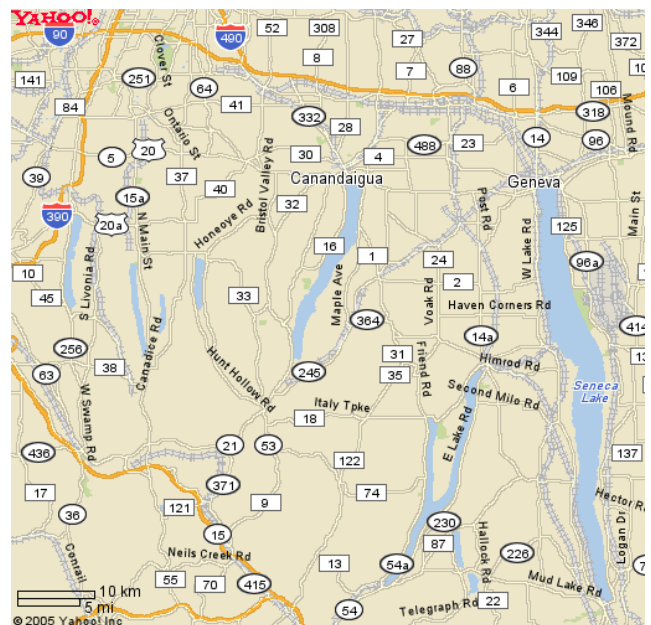
## Things you really need to know



- You and your family can plan to attend the same Mass you have been attending right along, with the same friends, this summer! No proposal on the table now recommends closing a church or dropping Masses in the coming year.
- Even though there are no immanent changes, we do need to plan. We need to discuss such things now, submitting a proposal that says we may need drastic changes when we do have fewer priests, or when our finances become unmanageable. Why not wait? So we won't be caught unprepared! This is the best way to chart our own course so that others don't make our decisions for us. When transitions must take place, we will have a plan to guide us.
- Both proposals DO call for us to move to one pastoral council, and one parish, one legal and one canonical structure, made up of our current churches. This ensures that leadership can all be in the same room, at the same time, discussing issues we must face together. This way everyone hears the same message from the clergy, staff, or various committees, thus improving communication. It also allows the pastor and other clergy more time and energy to focus on pastoral needs.
- We are all Christian communities trying our best, with God's help, to care about each other. No one community is planning to raid the savings of

another community. The pastor has already stated that such action would be totally unacceptable. Hostile takeovers may be acceptable in the business world, but there is no place for such things in the church.

- The planning proposal is not the only work we have to do, nor should it prevent us from other tasks before us. We will still be able to create committees we believe we need, to modify programs and make adjustments in staffing. This plan does not propose changes in the Mass schedule until necessary, but that doesn't mean a community could not propose a change that would better meet its needs in the interim, if it can be worked out with the other communities.
- While the Plan is a structure and guide on how to move forward, nothing is cast in concrete. The diocese expects the planning proposal to be a working living document, filled with the energy and imagination of its community. The whole point of planning is to create a strategy for adjusting to changing needs and realities. The task of the newly formed pastoral council, as well as other committees and leadership, will be to work out how we implement our plan, adjusting if we must.



*The length and breadth of our parish communities.*