

# COURIER-JOURNAL

SOUTHERN TIER-AUBURN GENEVA

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## Sessions Prepare for Hearing To Be Conducted by Bishop Clark

**By Martin Toombs**  
 Southern Tier Editor

**Corning** — Five educational programs in the Southern Tier on the need for an increase in the basic public assistance grant in New York State attracted 100 persons during the past month.

St. Patrick's, Corning, was the host Jan. 27 for the fourth meeting in the series, which concluded Feb. 3 at St. Ann's, Hornell. Earlier meetings took place at St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen; St. Francis, Catonk; and St. Peter and Paul, Elmira.

The sessions were preparation for a forum which will be conducted by Bishop Matthew H. Clark from 10 a.m. until noon, Monday, Feb. 23, at the Chemung County Infirmary in Elmira, on the need for a public assistance grant increase.

Bishop Clark joined the other bishops of New York State last spring, in calling for an increase in the basic welfare grant, which has not changed since 1974. During the summer of 1980, he asked the diocesan Office of Human Development to continue to work on the issue.

Recent developments in Albany have increased the chances for an increase this legislative term. But at the Corning meeting, Father Neil Miller, STOSM director, warned against complacency, noting the possibility that political wrangling over the amount of the increase could prevent approval of any.

Two state leaders, Gov. Hugh Carey and Senate Republican Majority Leader Warren Anderson of Binghamton, have each called

for, an increase. Carey has proposed a 10 percent rise this year and next; Anderson has suggested a 15 percent increase this year.

The Corning session included discussion of myths concerning welfare, and the argument for an increase now.

Giovina Caroscio, heading the Department of Justice and Peace for STOSM, described how the current welfare grant levels were set. She said that in 1974, the state legislature used 1972 statistics supplied by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics which set minimum levels for basic living needs for families of various sizes. The legislature reduced those levels by 12 percent, and established them as the public assistance benefit. They haven't changed since.

Using an example of a family of four in Steuben County, she noted that such a family would receive \$258 as their basic monthly grant. Shelter allowances, set in 1975, would be \$115 without utilities, or \$171 including utilities. The family also would receive approximately \$150 in food stamps.

She pointed out that the federal Housing and Urban Development "fair market rent" for Steuben County for such a family would be \$226 per month, including utilities. The family would have to make up the \$55 shortfall in the shelter allowance from their basic grant.

Those attending the Corning meeting, a group which included six priests, saw a filmstrip dealing with myths about welfare. Prepared by the United States Catholic Conference and the Campaign

for Human Development, the filmstrip is available on loan from the STOSM.

Following the filmstrip, meeting participants discussed the difficulty in getting some persons to accept information which contradicts their long-standing presumptions about those on welfare.

Father Miller said that he would like parish councils to pass a resolution favoring an increase, and to forward that resolution to Bishop Clark, so he can have the statements of support when he meets with

legislators from the diocese in March.

The priests present, making up more than half the audience, asked how they can remedy the apparent apathy shown by the lack of attendance by their parishioners. Father Miller and Sister Judith Reger of the STOSM acknowledged the lack of laity present, but expressed their appreciation for the number of clergy attending, outnumbering at that one meeting those who had attended the previous three.



### Thanks Offered

The students and faculty of St. Patrick's Junior High School, Elmira, took time Thursday, Jan. 29, to observe the national day of thanksgiving upon the return of the hostage Americans with a prayer service in the school gym. Each homeroom offered a prayer of thanks, and the service concluded with the singing of "God Bless America."

## Hornell Hospital Boards To Get Final Merger Plan

**By Martin Toombs**  
 Southern Tier Editor

**Hornell** — The final plans for consolidation of St. James Mercy and Bethesda hospitals are expected to be presented to the hospitals' boards next month, the Interim Advisory Committee planning the merger has stated.

For the past few months, architectural drawings of the two hospital buildings as they will be renovated and expanded have been prepared, and examined by hospital employees and the medical staffs. The drawings are along the lines established more than a year ago by the two hospital boards.

One major addition has been made. Current plans call for the construction of 60 nursing home beds at the Bethesda site. The shortage of nursing home beds in the area has long been regarded as a significant problem, and, Sister Rene McNiff, St. James, explained, the

hospitals added the service to answer the state's concern for the shortage.

Cost of the proposed construction has been estimated at \$15 million. The plans are being prepared by Cassefti-Klein architects of Elmira, and Sargent, Webster, Crenshaw and Foley architects of Syracuse.

Sister Rene said that the expected March submission of the merger and construction request should be examined immediately by the health planning, and state Health Department review process.

Sister Rene also said that the two boards are working on their slates of members for the merged board, which will be made up of eight persons named by each board, and two representatives of the local medical staff.

The St. James nominations will be discussed at the board's

Feb. 13 annual meeting, she said.

The Bethesda annual meeting took place Jan. 27, amid controversy concerning membership of the hospital's corporation, whose members also comprise the board of directors. All but one of 35 applications to join the corporation were rejected, as those members completing terms were re-elected. The one new member is Charles Henderson of Hornell, who recently retired after long-term service in the State Assembly.

Dr. Alan Folsom, long a merger opponent, was a spokesman for the effort to add members to the Bethesda corporation. He also is responsible for the presentation of a petition opposing the merger, reportedly signed by 9,000 persons. The petition drive, organized by an employee of Dr. Folsom, has been criticized for including names of persons who live outside the hospitals' service area. It is not known what effect, if any, the petition may have on the hospital boards, or on the planning and review process.

The Interim Advisory Committee release also summarizes the argument for the merger, noting the studies which have been done since 1976 which have recommended the action.

### Card Party Scheduled

Elmira — The Ladies of Charity of Elmira are sponsoring a card party at 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 12, at the Hibernian Center, at Pennsylvania Avenue and Kenyon Street. Refreshments will be served; admission will be \$1.

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### of C Journey Set

Geneva — Andrew Fiacco, state deputy of the Knights of Columbus, has announced the dates of the 20th annual State-wide Bowling Tournament sponsored by the organization.

The tournament will be held in Geneva March 21 and 28 and 29; and April 4 and 5. The theme of the tournament, according to Geneva Grand Knight Bernard Diuro, is "Springtime in the Finger Lakes."

Members of the organization may contact their own grand knights for application forms, or may write directly to: N.Y.S. Bowling Committee, Knights of Columbus, 39 Milton St., Geneva, N.Y. 14456.

### Parents Seminar Feb. 28

Auburn — A new weekend seminar for Parents of Children will be held at St. Mary's School here, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 28 and March 1.

The program, devised by John and Judy Platten, is being sponsored by the regional educational committee. The weekend is open to parents of all faiths, and single parents as well as couples.

Registration is made by contacting Claude Lester, St. Patrick's Parish, 97 W. Bayard St., Seneca Falls 3148, (315) 586-5203; or Patricia Lawlor, St. Alphonsus Parish, 95 E. Senessee St., Auburn 13021, (315) 252-7261.

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### Freedom Celebrated

A release of helium-filled balloons ended the service in thanksgiving for the return of the hostage Americans at St. Mary Our Mother School, Horseheads. The program took place Thursday, Jan. 29, the day designated as a national day of thanksgiving.