

Study

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was necessary, and enlisting disabled people to do the study proved too difficult.

But the study and the consciousness-raising continued. Volunteers encountered parish representatives who considered their church buildings accessible simply because they reserved parking spaces for the disabled. Other parish communities invested in ramps for the handicapped, but set aside no space for wheelchair seating inside the church. "We found out how many parishes and people are lacking an awareness of the needs of the handicapped," Wilbur observed.

Perhaps because they are so costly to renovate, bathrooms are among the most neglected areas of church accessibility. At first glance, access to a bathroom for the length of a typical weekend Mass might not seem to be a necessity. But as Wilbur pointed out, residents of rural areas may travel a considerable distance to church. People in wheelchairs are also quite often the first to arrive at church and the last to leave in order to avoid crowds. Add to those factors the general jostling the person endures getting in and out of the car, and the margin of comfort is considerably reduced. "We found that among people in wheelchairs, accessible bathrooms would indeed be a determining factor in whether they went somewhere or not," Wilbur said.

Overall, she was disappointed by response to the survey. Of the 49 parishes contacted, only 63 percent responded. "There was some opposition to the survey," she acknowledged. "Some people said 'Look, we don't have time, we don't have the money, and we just aren't interested.'"

"I realized that when you are looking at a budget and the need to keep the doors open and the heat on, you have to set some priorities," Wilbur added, "(but) that was kind of hard to hear. Maybe you don't see a need, but how could you see it if your eyes aren't open to it?"

On the other hand, she was heartened by results from those parishes that did participate. "It was surprising to me the number of churches that were willing to include (accessibility) in their plans for renovations, and also how much was already available," she said. "We do have something

1986 Parish Handicapped Accessibility Study Finger Lakes Region

* accessible to wheelchairs

County	Parish	Church	church entrance*	church door width*	seating*	church/hall bathroom*	hall entrance*	reserved parking	walkway/parking lot*	large type/braille materials	
Cayuga	Auburn	Holy Family	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		Sacred Heart	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		St. Alphonsus	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		St. Hyacinth	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		St. Mary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Ss. Peter and Paul	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Aurora	St. Patrick	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Cato	St. Patrick	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Cayuga	St. Joseph	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	King Ferry	Our Lady of Lake	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Ontario	Clifton Springs	St. Patrick	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		St. Francis deSales	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		St. Stephen	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		St. Francis	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
		St. Mary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Rushville	St. Mary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Stanley	St. Theresa	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Seneca	Interlaken	St. Francis Solanus	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Wayne	St. Gregory	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Ontario	St. Mary of Lake	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Palmyra		St. Anne	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Red Creek		St. Thomas	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Wayne	Sodus	Epiphany	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Sodus Point	St. Rose of Lima	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Wolcott	St. Mary Magdalene	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Dundee	St. Andrew	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Penn Yan	St. Michael	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	

The study included the following categories of information not shown above: amplification systems or interpreters for the hearing impaired, St. Alphonsus and Ss. Peter and Paul, Auburn, and St. Stephen, Geneva; religious instruction for the disabled, Holy Family, Auburn; accessible telephones, St. Hyacinth, Auburn, St. Joseph, Weedsport, St. Francis Solanus, Interlaken, St. Mary of the Lake, Ontario, St. Ann, Palmyra, and Epiphany, Sodus.

happening, something to build on, whereas we started out thinking there was nothing out there."

Although renovations to Wilbur's own church, St. Michael's in Penn Yan, were

already being planned as the Finger Lakes study got under way, the study "fueled the effort as far as (accessibility) being a priority," according to Father William C. Michatek, pastor.

The renovations, which Father Michatek hopes will be completed by Easter, 1988, will allow the physically disabled access to the church building, chapel, and a bathroom. He estimates the cost of the construction at between \$100,000 and \$200,000, depending in part on whether the parish opts for a ramp or a lift at the church entrance.

That's a lot of money for a small-town parish in which a growing percentage of the congregation lives on fixed incomes. At

present, fewer than half-a-dozen disabled people worship regularly at St. Michael's, even though it is one of only two Catholic churches in all of Yates County.

So why did they spend so much money on so few people? "We are becoming an area with an older population," Father Michatek explained. "Many of our older people would benefit from easier access."

"The stock answer when people are asked about accessibility is 'We don't have any handicapped,'" he added. "My response has been 'How would you know if they can't get into the church?'"

More than a few parishes, hampered as St. Michael's is by limited finances, have decided that accessibility is just not worth the cost.

At St. Mary Magdalen in Wolcott, parishioners explored and rejected the idea of installing an entrance ramp. The steep grade in front of the church would have made the ramp prohibitively expensive, according to Father Robert G. Smith, pastor. At the same time, St. Thomas Aquinas Church in nearby Red Creek is accessible to wheelchairs. "We feel there's nothing we can do except tell people they can go to St. Thomas," Father Smith said.

The consensus was similar among parishioners at St. Felix in Clifton Springs. Parish council members discussed the issue of accessibility off and on for nearly eight years, according to Father John Roach, pastor. Estimates exceeded \$10,000 for a ramp that was "by no means a Cadillac," he explained.

The ramp would have also altered the century-old church's graceful lines. "It would be like parking a Mack truck in front of the church and leaving it there," Father Roach said. "(The council) finally decided that it simply didn't justify the cost."

A lack of funds is one of the major obstacles to church accessibility, but parishes can accommodate the disabled without spending much, according to Luci Dechaine, head of Catholic Charities Ministry to the Disabled in the Genesee Valley region.

Printing bulletins in large type, scheduling parish meetings in those rooms that are accessible, and designating parking for disabled parishioners are a few examples. "Physical accessibility is just a small part of it," Dechaine said. "There are plenty of attitudinal things parishes can do that don't cost any money at all."

And there are those who see even a disproportionately large investment in accessibility as worthwhile. The newly installed ramp at St. Francis Solanus Parish in Interlaken has so far attracted only a couple of new worshippers, according to Father Nelson Ruppert, pastor. But they are a significant addition for a parish of fewer than 200 members. Later this week on October 4, Father Ruppert plans to offer the Anointing of the Sick. For a change, he noted, those who are physically disabled will be able to attend.

Local groups announce World Food Day plans

Local groups are sponsoring a variety of workshops and discussions in connection with World Food Day, Friday, Oct. 16.

Dr. David Pimentel, an ecologist and professor of entomology from Cornell University, will visit Asbury First Methodist Church on Tuesday, Oct. 6, to speak on "The Ecological Approach to Agriculture Abroad and at Home." Dr. Pimentel's talk will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall, 1040 East Avenue, Rochester. Sponsors include the New York State Farm Alliance and the Politics of Food.

On Thursday, Oct. 15, "Speakout on Hunger in Rochester" will feature displays, workshops and a panel discussion at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St., between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Two workshops — "Where Do Food Programs Fit into Your County, State and National Budget?" and "How to Run an Alternative Holiday Market" — will be offered between 10:45 and 11:45 a.m. From 12:15-1 p.m.,

panelists Inez Mitchell of EMPOWER; Michael Affleck, director of St. Joseph's House of Hospitality; Barbara Krueger, a nutritionist with the New York State Department of Health; and Nan Johnson, Monroe County legislator, will discuss hunger in Rochester.

Following the panel presentation, workshop participants will break into small groups for discussion. The afternoon's event will conclude with a wrap-up by Kathy Simpson, a children's advocate.

On Friday, Oct. 16, the Cenacle Center for Spirituality will host a conference and case study on hunger entitled "Conflict and Conciliation." The program will begin Friday at 6 p.m. and conclude on Saturday, Oct. 17, at 4 p.m. For information and registration, contact Fritz Longabaugh, (716) 325-7727.

For information on other World Food Day-related events, contact Sheila Levis, (716) 647-3400, Gail Mott, 381-5606, or Barb Krueger, 423-8108.

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