

# PARISH FEATURE



Pete Salato, mayor of the village of Cuyaga, also served as chief chef at the spaghetti dinner.

## Histories

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ture in 1984, figured into the decision to cluster the four parishes, noted Father William Spilly, who served as Cayuga Team Ministry's pastor from 1984 until 1990. He headed a team that included himself, Deacon Prave, and Sister Brigid Quinn, RSM.

Originally, the cluster also included St. Isaac Jogues Parish in Fleming and St. Bernard's Parish in Scipio Center, noted Father Spilly, who now serves as pastor of the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community. The original plan, however, had called for two priests to be assigned to the cluster. When that did not happen, St. Isaac Jogues and St. Bernard's branched off from the cluster.

Cayuga Team Ministry presented a challenge not only in terms of the distance the staff had to cover, but also in terms of the people's feelings, Father Spilly recalled.

"The vast majority of the people were understanding," Father Spilly said. But, he acknowledged, "Maybe some regretted the loss of the priests."

"I remember it was a rocky time" for many of the people, recalled Therese

Shook, a member of St. Michael's Parish since 1978 and past president of the Cluster Council. "Not only did you lose your concept of parish, you lost your parish priest."

Some people even feared that the clustering was simply a prelude to closing parishes, observed Kevin Mahaney, a lifelong member of Our Lady of the Lake Parish and a member of the Cluster Council.

"I remember there was a long time when people thought it was just another step toward closing the church," Mahaney said. "Father Spilly did come in and make changes. There was a lot of anxiety."

Those changes included modifying the weekend Mass schedule to take into account that just one priest was serving all four parishes. Religious education programs were merged into one, and the Cluster Council was created.

Among the changes at Our Lady of the Lake was creating a parish council and increasing the involvement of lay people, Mahaney said.

"Father Stanton was very traditional," Mahaney explained, adding that the priest had run the parish without a council by doing the jobs that lay people were taking over in other parishes.

"Father Spilly was of the newer gen-

## Vital Statistics

**St. Patrick's Parish, Aurora**  
1851 — Established as St. Agnes Parish  
1855 — Church constructed  
1874 — New church built; re-named St. Patrick's Parish  
June 26, 1984 — Cayuga Team Ministry created

**St. Joseph's Parish, Cayuga**  
1853 — Established as mission parish  
1870 — First church built  
1904 — mission of St. Aloysius Church, Auburn  
1972 — Became independent parish

**Our Lady of the Lake Parish, King Ferry**  
1868 — Established as mission parish  
1913 — Became independent parish

**St. Michael's Parish, Union Springs**  
1851 — Established as parish  
1855 — Church building completed  
1974 — Purchased, began move to former Episcopal church

eration of priests," Mahaney continued. "People had to become involved in the day-to-day running of the parish. That was a big change, because people had to get more involved."

And as members of each parish have become more involved — and because of the joint cluster services and functions — the people have come to know each other, Walsh noted.

"You get to know a lot of different people," Walsh observed. "I think people are getting the feeling that we are all related. It used to be you'd hear people in Aurora say, 'You people in Union Springs want this. You people want that.' You don't hear that any more."

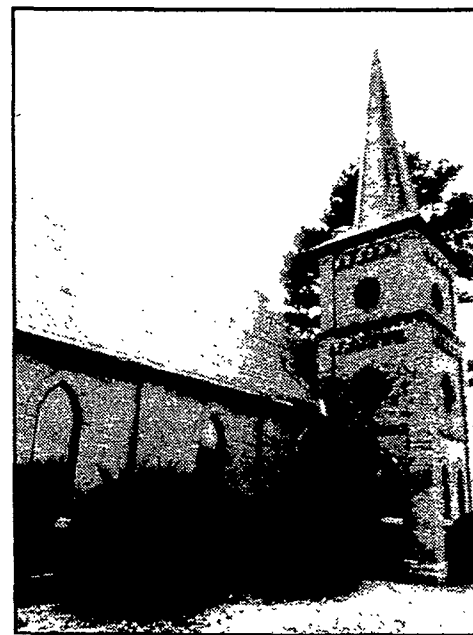
The cluster also had to overcome the disadvantage of encompassing communities in two rival school districts — King Ferry and Aurora in the Southern Cayuga School District, and Cayuga and Union Springs in the Union Springs School District. But cluster activities have also helped to break down some of those rivalries, noted Matt Ferrari, a junior at Southern Cayuga High School and a member of Our Lady of the Lake Parish.

"It's not just that you see more people, you get to know them too," Ferrari said of the programs, activities and retreats offered for youths. "That's one thing the teen group is trying to do."

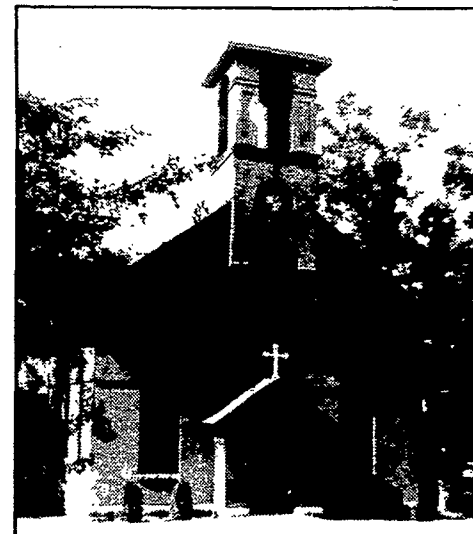
"I think people are thinking more and more in terms of a larger perception of the church" as a result of the clustering, Shook suggested. "It takes time. Religion is pretty close to the heart of people. You've got a lot going on emotionally."

It was recognition of this fact — and of the parishes' individuality — that has led Fathers Spilly and Father Ryan and their staffs to move slowly with the process.

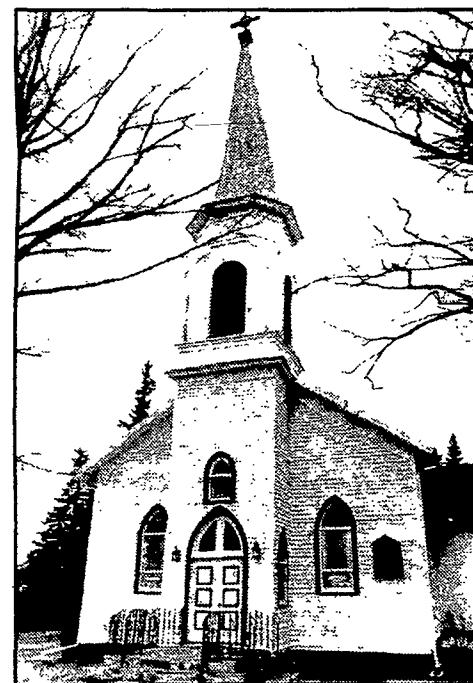
"We are different — just as in a family the children are different," Father Ryan commented. "But we have to work together."



St. Michael, Union Springs



St. Patrick, Aurora



Our Lady of the Lake, King Ferry



St. Joseph, Cayuga


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