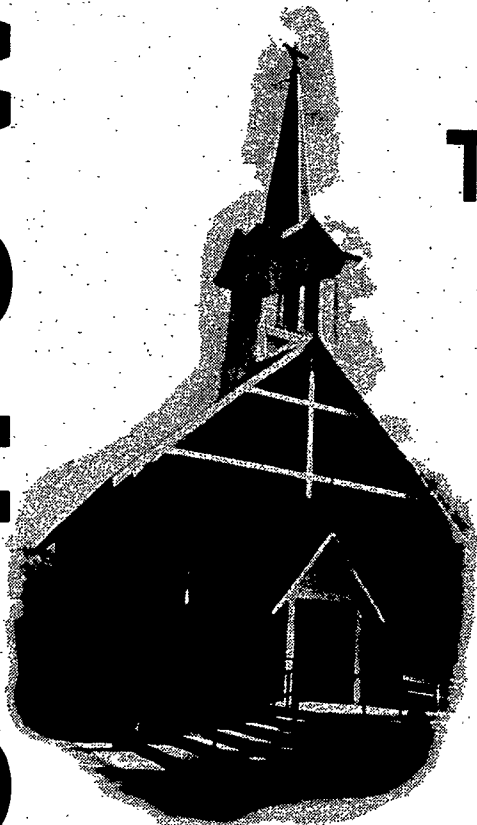


# millennium:

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**Toward the new millennium:**



St. John the Evangelist,  
Newark Valley

## Tioga plan unifies six parishes

Story by Kathleen Schwar

It was a dark and stormy night – an inauspicious but memorable start to planning for the new millennium in Tioga County.

“As we like to reminisce, it was a hot June evening. There was a thunderstorm in the area, and it was raining,” Ray Parmarter recalled. “It was not a pleasant time to have any meeting, and everybody

was on edge.”

The core members of the future Tioga Planning Group Leadership Team got acquainted that 1997 night in a stuffy classroom at Owego’s St. Patrick’s School.

While they well remember their stormy night together, they’re now looking forward to a hopefully more pleasant evening – June 15, 1998 – to celebrate the unity they’ve accomplished.

“Where we started, to where we are now, is worlds apart,” said Richard Orth, the planning group chair.

“These people are my friends,” he explained. “I believe we are a microcosm of how our six churches will be in the years to come. It does take time. But once you’ve got it, there’s almost an unbreakable sense of trust and willingness to build upon each other’s strengths.”

The Tioga team was among the first groups formed in the Diocese of Rochester to create five-year plans as part of the diocese’s Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium initiative.

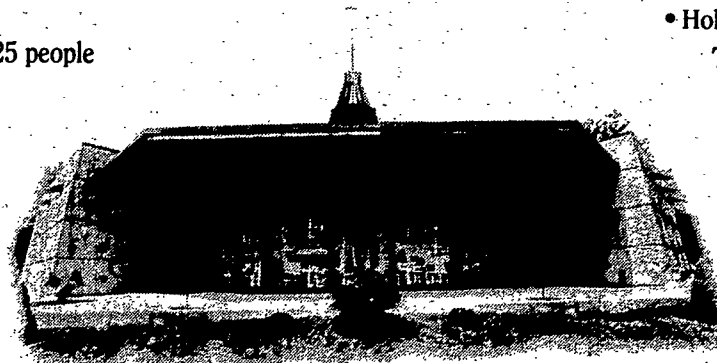
The Tioga planning team members named their group the “SOS Parishes,” a name coined by team co-chair Helen Cooney, for “Strength of Six”: St. Francis of Assisi, Catatonk; St. James, Waverly; St. John the Evangelist, Newark Valley; St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin; St. Patrick, Owego; and St. Pius X, Van Etten (just over Tioga’s western border, in Chemung County).

“We chuckle about (SOS),” said Parmarter, a member of St. Francis who added the team hoped nobody would “get the wrong idea.” He has chaired one of four sub-teams, formed to consider finance and facilities, programming and staffing, configuration/structure, and communications.

The overall group eventually consisted of 25 people from six the churches. It included the three pastors: Father William Moorby of St. Francis, St. John and St. Patrick; Father Thomas H. Watts of St. James and St. Pius X; and Father David P. Simon of St. Margaret Mary.

The group brainstormed, then organized and evaluated their thoughts, Orth explained. The six churches took turns hosting meetings.

Team members noted that William Pickett, diocesan director of planning, frequently attended their meetings. “He’s been a very valuable



St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin



St. Francis of Assisi, Catatonk

## City parishes prepare to share talents, lives

Story by Rob Cullivan

Is it possible to serve on a committee for months and months and emerge from the experience calling it “refreshing”?

Yes, indeed, if you are Mark Hare, who co-chaired the Flower City/Lexington Group. The planning group met from August 1997 to February of this year and devised a common five-year pastoral plan for three Rochester parishes – Sacred Heart Cathedral, Holy Rosary and Most Precious Blood.

The Flower City/Lexington group is one of 35 planning groups comprising varying numbers of diocesan parishes and faith communities. These groups were called by the diocese to create pastoral plans for the new millennium.

Hare said he enjoyed working with the group because the plan it created challenges the laity to respond to the Vatican II call for them to share in the church’s universal priesthood of believers. As the overall number of priests continues to decline in the diocese, such a call must be taken seriously by the laity, noted Hare, a parishioner at Sacred Heart.

“That’s not just some kind of mantra ...,” he said. “We just can’t assume any longer that all the things we used to leave to the priests and sisters are going to be done by the priests and sisters.”

Who’s affected by the plan? In brief, the Flower City/Lexington Group involves:

- Sacred Heart, 296 Flower City Park, home to Bishop Matthew H. Clark. The parish consists of 2,000 families and individuals, according to Father Thomas P. Mull, administrative pastor.

- Holy Rosary Church, 414 Lexington Ave. The parish has between 500 and 600 families, according to Rose M. Davis, pastoral associate.

- Most Precious Blood, 219 Stenson St., which comprises 525 families, according to Father William Graf, pastor. Father Graf ends his assignment as pastor in June and will be replaced by Father John M. Mulligan, a diocesan vicar general,

in September.

The pastoral councils of all three parishes approved the Flower City/Lexington Group plan earlier this year. The plan has also been

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