

# PARISH PROFILE

## Church works to give all its members room to grow

**Parish Profile**  
St. Helen's,  
Gates



By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

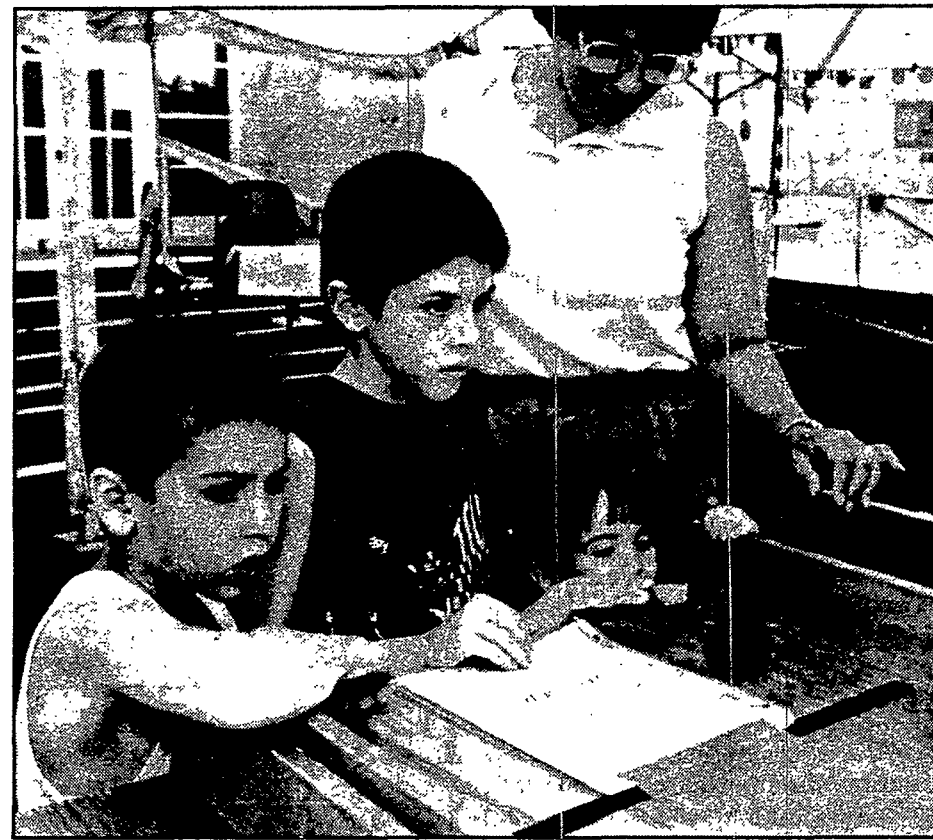
**GATES** — In February 1997, Cindy Enright lost her husband of 22 years, Phil, to cancer. Turning to various secular support groups for the grieving, she found comfort. But she was frustrated because the groups did not allow participants to share their faith.

Eventually, Enright found exactly what she was looking for at St. Helen's Church, founded in 1930. Last fall she joined the parish's bereavement group, which meets monthly in the rectory. Being able to talk freely about God's role in her life is a major attraction of the St. Helen's group, she said.

"All during (my husband's) illness, it was my faith that kept me strong, that kept me going," she said.

Father John Firpo, pastor, pointed out that the parish began the bereavement group last year because while the church provided support before and during a loved one's funeral, there was no formal mechanism to help parishioners cope with the aftermath of a loved one's death.

The bereavement group is just one of many smaller units of parishioners who operate on behalf of St. Helen's 1,150 registered families. Another such group is the parish's small Christian community, according to Rayann Meagher-Ranzenbach,



Joy Ott brought her three sons, from left, David, Michael and Brian, to a country fair at the parish June 26 to play games and win prizes. Proceeds from the event go to help St. Helen's School.

the parish's pastoral secretary and family minister. Meagher-Ranzenbach researches discussion topics for the group, which meets monthly in members' homes.

Sue Zubert said her faith has grown since she and her husband, Tom, joined the small Christian community when it was formed in 1994.

"I'm sharing with people on a one-to-one basis, rather than just sitting in church

and praying and going to Communion," she said.

There is another way that parishioners may feel more involved, according to Joe Ganley, the parish's liturgy director. Unlike parishes that use choirs that rehearse regularly, St. Helen's allows any parishioner who shows up for one choir rehearsal on Wednesday to sing that weekend.

"There's no auditioning," he said, adding that the parish does have a core group of musicians who employ their talents at liturgies.

St. Helen's also encourages young people to take part in parish life, according to Gina Jennison, who directs faith formation for children and youth ministry. For example, she said, teenagers and children participate in parish service groups, and teenagers are being trained to serve in parish liturgies.

One such teenager is Gina Capellazzi, a 15-year-old who will be a sophomore at Gates Chili High School in the fall. Capellazzi is a member of the parish's youth group, which meets on Thursday nights, and also a lector at Mass.

"I think it's important for youth to be a part of our parish," she said. "We're going to be the future of the church, but it's important for us to be the church of today as well."

Capellazzi is also one of 15 teenage liturgical dancers who appear at special liturgies in St. Helen's throughout the year.

"It's another way of worshipping instead of just reading and singing," she said. "You're expressing yourself a little more."

For senior citizens who can't make it to Mass each weekend, solace can be found in the volunteers who work with Sister Loreto Reynolds, SSND, in an outreach to St. Helen's elderly members. One such volunteer is Augie Misiurewic, who has been taking the Eucharist to homebound seniors for four years.

"I always felt that if I was homebound at all, I would want someone to bring the Eucharist to me," he said, noting he visits three to four people each Sunday. "I usually bring them a bulletin, and answer any questions about what's going on at the parish."

St. Helen's provides a similar service to parishioners of any age who are hospitalized, according to Deacon Richard Schuler, pastoral associate. Indeed, St. Helen's staff and volunteers seem marked by a willingness to go where parishioners are — either literally or figuratively.

For example, Patricia Rodman, who oversees adult faith formation and consis-



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern  
Cindy Semrau puts a temporary tattoo on the arm of Melissa Templeton at the face-painting and tattoo booth at the country fair.

## SNAPSHOT

St. Helen's Church  
310 Hinchey Road, Gates

Ministerial Staff:

Pastor: **Father John A. Firpo**

Weekend assistant:

**Father Bill McCurdy, SJ**

Pastoral associate:

**Deacon Richard Schuler**

Business manager: **Tracey Sheehan**

Liturgy director: **Joe Ganley**

Instrumentalist/choir director:

**Hugh Brodsky**

Outreach to the elderly:

**Sister Loreto Reynolds, SSND**

Faith formation for children/youth

minister: **Gina Jenison**

Faith formation/youth secretary:

**Debbie Sumner**

Adult faith formation/consistent

life ethic: **Patricia Rodman**

Pastoral secretary/family minister:

**Rayann Meagher-Ranzenbach**

Maintenance supervisor:

**Dale Hitchcock**

School principal:

**Mary Beth Sullivan-Napier**

School secretary: **Jean Taylor**

Priest in residence:

**Father Kevin McKenna**

## The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

### PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

O God, who wills not the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live, grant, we beseech Thee through the intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin and all the saints, an increase of laborers for Thy Church, fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls through the same Jesus Christ Thy Son who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the union of the Holy Spirit world without end. Amen

Imprimatur: Most Rev. James E. Kearney

## August, 1999

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Revs. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pope John Paul II	Inactive Priests	Joseph P. McCaffrey	Severin Msemwa	Dennis Kauffman, CSB	Robert J. Kennedy	Bishop Matthew H. Clark
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Roy J. Kiggins	Leo Klem CSB	T. Paul Broadhurst, CSB	Robert G. Kreckel	Christopher E. Linsler	Gerard J. McMahon	Msgr. Gerard C. Krieg
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
William B. Leone	Edward L. Palumbos	John J. Philipps	John Murray, CSB	Robert P. Ring	Lawrence W. Sansom	Oliver O'Connor, OFM CA
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
John V. Rosse	John J. Quinn	Edwin Obiorah	Eugene O'Hara, OFM	Desmond O'Neill	John T. Reif	Jerome F. Schifferli
29	30	31	Look for the September MPRP Calendar in the August 26th Courier.			
Albert J. Shamon	Vocations	Seminarians				

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tent life ethic efforts at the parish, said St. Helen's has recently revamped its Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults to better serve individuals who aspire to be Catholics. She noted that RCIA candidates no longer must participate in a formalized catechetical program from September to Easter Vigil, but may proceed at their own pace. They may take as much time as they want to enter the church, whether it's three months or three years.

"We're placing ourselves at the service of the people, and not placing them in a particular category," she said. "You will know when you want to take that ultimate step. This is a process to help you develop your relationship with God."

Developing parishioners' willingness to serve the church with their time, talent and treasure marks the volunteer work of Lisa Marcelletti, a former RCIA candidate who now chairs St. Helen's stewardship committee. Formed in February, the committee will be working soon with the parish's various groups to envision how each group can better serve, she said.

"I don't think that you can really appreciate the Christian life until you can accept your life as a servant," she said. "I think once you do that, it frees you, and allows you to appreciate the Christian life for the beautiful thing it is."