



**Our Lady of Fatima Parish
&
St. Helen's Parish**

Local Planning Group 3

Schenectady Deanery

Draft Recommendations and Plans

For Submission to:

Office of Pastoral Planning

Diocese of Albany

June 2008

Recommendations and Plans for Reconfiguration (Section 1)

Mission

Our considerations for the reconfiguration and leadership plans are governed by the paramount importance of mission. We have sought to determine what best serves our parishioners and the wider community in an area that desperately seeks the consolation of Christian service, especially for those who are disadvantaged and suffer from spiritual or material hunger and need. The plan includes the flexibility to adapt to the “signs of the times” and to meet new challenges as they arise.

As two communities who seek to bring Christ to all people, we are bound to measure our success by witnessing to the presence of the risen Jesus and bringing the light of Christ to the “those that dwell in the shadow of darkness.” We promise to be alert to any possibility of animating the gospel and to focus our energies in sharing the redeeming peace of the Holy Spirit to all we can serve.

Status of Parishes after Reconfiguration (Part 1)

Summary Recommendations

After following the Called To Be Church Process and with prayerful discernment, our Local Planning Group recommends the following:

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Our Lady of Fatima	Link with St. Helen’s
St. Helen’s	Link with Our Lady of Fatima

Explanation of Recommendations and Plans (Part 2)

Parishes’ Profiles and Demographics

Both Our Lady of Fatima and St. Helen’s are suburban/urban parishes in Schenectady County. St. Helen’s is located in the Town of Niskayuna while Our Lady of Fatima is situated in both the Town of Niskayuna and the City of Schenectady. The populations of both parishes are a healthy mix of older, middle-aged and young families from Schenectady County, western Albany County, southern Saratoga County and the Village of Scotia. According to Parish Data Systems (PDS), Our Lady of Fatima has 719 registered families representing 1,840 individuals with a median age of 41 which corresponds to the average median age in the Town of Niskayuna of 41.8 years. Similarly, St. Helen’s has 1,277 registered families representing 3,911 individuals with a median age of 34. The Town’s website reflects a vibrant community of 21,000 people, 6,372 residential homes, 1,415 apartments, and the highest average family income in the Capital District. The area directly served by both parishes is home to major corporate research, laboratory and manufacturing companies, major health care and elder care facilities as well as highly regarded institutions of higher learning. We point out these facts to give the reader a flavor of the area from which we draw the majority of our parishioners.

Rationale Not To Close or Merge

Since the elements of the rationales “not to close” and “not to merge” are similar in nature, we choose to present them in a consolidated format to avoid redundancy. However, we point out that the presence of a viable Catholic elementary school at St. Helen’s and the fact that neither parish has any potential, material capital expenses on the horizon are cogent reasons “not to close.”

Financial Viability

Both parishes have been and, we project, will continue to be financially viable in accordance with Diocesan criteria. Both parishes have been and for the next 5 years will be able to:

- ❖ Meet all current liabilities, including payments on long-term debt. Currently, St. Helen’s has a \$73,000 debt to the Diocese. Our Lady of Fatima has no debt.
- ❖ Pay just wages to all parish staffs.
- ❖ Ensure that all wages continue to be commensurate with the applicable market and Diocesan Guidelines. Diocesan cost-of-living recommendations are followed.
- ❖ Continue the financial ability to achieve recommendations and plans. There are no material adverse financial implications to our recommendations.

In support of the above, we offer this summary of the financial viability of each parish as of fiscal year end June 2007.

	<u>Our Lady of Fatima</u>	<u>St. Helen’s</u>
Income from Collections	\$389,882	\$478,436
Other Income	<u>\$138,602</u>	<u>\$328,515</u>
Total Income	\$528,484	\$806,951
Total Expenses	<u>\$532,543</u>	<u>\$744,737</u>
Net Income	\$ (4,059)	\$ 62,214

We point out that total income in both parishes is up 1% to 1.5% respectively from 2002 to 2007. While these increases in income may seem nominal, nevertheless, indeed they are increases *vis a vis* the Church’s sexual abuse crisis highlighted by the fact that, in 2003-2004, Our Lady of Fatima was without a resident pastor for over one year as a consequence of an unfounded accusation. Both parishes thrived despite those difficulties and, based on the demonstrated faithfulness of our parish families, we have every confidence that they will continue to do so.

Having said that, to be faithful to the mission of Jesus Christ, we are open to the reconfiguration option of merger at some point in the indeterminate future. Considerations that may lead to such a decision in the future include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Outgrowing current worship spaces.
- ❖ Consolidation of staffing, programs and other activities resulting in a *de facto* “functional merger.”
- ❖ An emerging will of the people to merge into one new parish.

Rationale For Linkage

Our reasons for choosing linkage are based on the spiritual, financial, and ministerial vibrancy of both parishes. Both Our Lady of Fatima and St. Helen’s have been “clustered” for a number of years and have a history of collaboration. Both faith communities have a strong sense of identity, yet demonstrate a willingness to collaborate through linkage. While details are in the Mission section of this report, we cite the following examples of current and proposed linkage.

- ❖ Mass schedules were changed in July 2007 to reflect one priest.
- ❖ Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers currently minister on an inter-parish basis.
- ❖ The *Triduum* was celebrated jointly during Easter 2008.
- ❖ Fr. Longobucco, Deacon Sharrow and Deacon Thiesen preach at both worship sites on a consistent, scheduled basis.
- ❖ Communal Penance and Anointing of the Sick services continue to be celebrated jointly.
- ❖ Confirmation continues to be celebrated jointly.
- ❖ Parish RCIA programs were combined in 2008.
- ❖ Vacation Bible School during the summer continues to be operated jointly.
- ❖ Parish Social Justice Committees (already working together on specific projects) will link more deeply with the goal of combining them.
- ❖ A number of years ago, both parishes formed a “sister parish” relationship with the Church of St. Agustin in Mexico and continue to work imaginatively and collaboratively for the good of the people of all
- ❖ As evidenced in this document, members of our Administration & Finance, Faith Formation, Sacramental Preparation, and Christian Service committees have adopted new and innovative ideas to maximize the connection between the parishes.

Proposed Mass Schedules (Part 3)

It is important to note that substantial linkage has already occurred in a number of areas, the most prominent of which is our weekend Mass schedule. Since we already have the number of priests projected for 2015 (i.e. 1), in July 2007, we reduced the number of weekend Masses between the 2 parishes from 6 to 4. Thus, our present and projected weekend Mass schedules are identical.

<u>Worship Sites</u>	<u>Seating Capacity</u>	<u>Parking Capacity</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>
Our Lady of Fatima	395	140	719
St. Helen's	700	220	1,300

Weekend Masses (Current to 2009)

Saturday Masses

<u>Site</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
SH	4:30 pm	444

Sunday Masses

<u>Site</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
OLF	8:30 am	355
SH	10:00 am	630
OLF	11:30 am	390

Note: We anticipate that the number of Masses will remain the same. However, we may need to revise Mass times dependent upon Deanery Mass schedules and pastoral concerns.

Weekday Masses (Current through 2009)

<u>Day</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>Time</u>
Monday	Our Lady of Fatima	9:00 am
Tuesday	St. Helen's	9:00 am
Wednesday	NO MASS	
Thursday	St. Helen's	9:00 am
Friday	Our Lady of Fatima	9:00 am

Note: To the extent possible, funeral Masses are scheduled as the daily Mass at each worship site.

Communications Plan (Part 4)

Task

1st Pulpit Presentation

Implementation Date

May 3 & 4

Other Modes of Communication:

Bulletin Overview piece

Core Team names listed in Bulletins

Email Feedback:

April 12 & 13

May 10 & 11 thru June 30

May 10 & 11 thru June 15

admin@olfatima.cc

helen1803@aol.com

Full Document Available to People

May 3 & 4

Parishes websites (see Bulletins)

Start May 3 & 4

50 hard copies on weekend

Start May 3 & 4

Call offices for hard copy

Start May 3 & 4

Comment Boxes in Churches

Start May 10 & 11

2nd Pulpit Presentation

May 17 & 18

1st Town Hall – St. Helen's 7:00 pm

May 22 (Thu)

2nd Town Hall – Our Lady of Fatima 7:00 pm

June 1 (Sun)

Final Pulpit Presentation

June 28 & 29

MISSION--RELATED COMMITTEES

Life Long Faith Formation Committee

Currently, both St Helen's and Our Lady of Fatima have similar approaches to Faith Formation and the Sacrament preparation. While differences exist, many are the result of two separate parishes operating to meet unique and diverse needs. Both offer members a sense of community and opportunity to worship in an environment that feels welcoming.

Today, sharing between the two Parish staff occurs freely and collaboratively, and the Programs are separate. It is the opinion of the team that with time, the two parishes could combine Faith Formation Programs in the next 4-6 years. To accomplish this combination, the Parishes must continue to build a strong linked relationship to facilitate combining Faith Formation programs. The plan is to first link, and later combine and deliver one shared approach to the two programs for two sites. This report will address the following Program Areas within the Faith Formation:

Early Childhood
School Age children
Young Adults
Adults

Essential Actions Needed to Improve Linkage:

To enhance collaborative efforts between the two parishes, the following actions are essential to facilitate a constructive and cohesive approach to the Faith Formation Programs, regardless of Program Area:

- ❖ Improve Overall Communication & Planning
 - ❖ Increase staff interactions and communication opportunities –
 - ❖ The staff from both parishes with program responsibility will need to engage more frequently (joint staff meetings) to develop a coordinated and integrated planning calendar for both parishes. Through these interactions staff will seek opportunities to achieve parity between the programs where possible.
- Timing: Begin 4Q 2008, Implementation 2008 – 2009

Develop an integrated approach to improve communications between the two parish communities by:

- ❖ Designating one staff person to coordinate the communications process among both staff and parish.
- ❖ Incorporating Faith Formation information into each bulletin available at both churches.
- ❖ Creating hotlinks on both parish websites to improve an overall understanding of Faith Formation Programs at both churches.

- ❖ Seeking opportunities to utilize Website Technology to centralize the registration processes.
- ❖ Providing mechanisms to solicit comments from parishioners.

Timing: Begin 4Q 2008, Implementation: - 2008-2009

Determine Whether A Reorganization or Job Restructuring Of Parish Personnel Is Required:

It is possible for the staff of both parishes to continue to serve in the same capacities without changing reporting relationships, payroll, or job responsibilities. However, an examination job descriptions and duties is required to uncover any job restructuring that may need to occur. The objective of a job review would be to uncover opportunities to eliminate duplicative efforts and redundancy and reconfigure personnel to best serve parishes in a linked arrangement. Timing: Complete by 1Q 2009

1. EARLY CHILDHOOD

Each year approximately 35 are baptized at St. Helen’s and approximately 25 at OLF. Currently, Baptisms are performed separately by each parish. At St. Helen’s the parent/guardian attends a Baptism class taught by couples of the parish and the Deacon or Priest and schedule a Baptism. The Rite of Baptism for Children is followed. OLF conducts Pre-Baptism preparation sessions for the parents/guardians, which covers the theology and the rite of baptism and the families schedule baptisms, with consideration to their preferences. Even when the Faith Formation Programs link (and later combine), the two parishes will continue to maintain separate baptismal preparation classes and retain their current approaches to scheduling Baptisms.

In a linked relationship, OLF Baptismal records of school age children will be available to St Helen’s School so these families are invited to the School’s Open Houses. Timing 2Q 2008.

“My Grown Up and Me” invites all St. Helen’s and Our Lady of Fatima parish families with preschool-aged children, to come to our school and participate in an hour of fun in the school Library.

At St. Helen’s school, there will be a 5-day Morning Kindergarten Readiness Program for 4-year-olds. This class will be combined with our 2-day Nursery Program for 3-year-olds on Tuesday and Thursdays. We will continue to offer a 3-day Pre-K program for both the morning and the afternoon. September 2008

Today, there is a joint Parent and Child Group (mom & tot type group) with parishioners from both parishes attending. During the meetings, the moms discuss scripture/faith ideas.

Additionally, both parishes operate a Nursery during Mass on Sundays. The nurseries which are run by volunteers who have attended Virtus training, and follow the Diocesan rules, enables parents to attend mass while their child, ages 1-4 years is having supervised play in the nursery.

Each parish will continue to have Liturgy of the Word for Children, grades 1 to 5. During the mass, children are invited to participate in a scriptural activity for children. During the Children's Liturgy of the Word, children are escorted to another area of the church where they are engaged in song, share stories, readings, or other relevant activities related to the scriptural reading. Volunteers conduct the children's liturgical activity and the children return to mass after the homily.

It is expected the Early Childhood activities will remain separate at each parish and operate based on the needs of the two individual parishes.

1. SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

St. Helen's School has a total enrollment for the current year is 170 students. We have one Educare, one Nursery, two Pre-K classes, two Kindergartens, one First, one Second, one Third, one Fourth and one Fifth.

There are approximately 233 students in grades Pre-K to 5 at St. Helen's and 130 students at OLF. (There are approximately 120 students in the K-4 program). Supporting these 363 students are approximately 90 volunteers (57 at St. Helen's and 32 at OLF) serving in a variety of roles including catechists, aides, substitutes and part of the sacramental prep team. Currently, there is a staff of two at St. Helen's and one part-time staff at OLF providing the leadership support and management for the programs. In addition to the curriculum which is very similar, (although different textbooks are used), students at St. Helen's undertake visits to Alterra Wynwood, make cards for Veterans, collect supplies, and make cards for the sister parish, St. Augustine. At OLF students make cards for homebound parishioners and seniors, participate in food drives, and collections for homeless shelters.

In a linked scenario, there would be very little change to the current approach of two distinct programs with the schedules open to the children of each parish. Participants in Faith Formation will continue to be welcomed at either church. Today this happens, but infrequently. Elements of a linked program include changes as follows:

St. Helen's School

The School Assessment for Our Lady of Fatima Parish paid directly to St. Helen's School instead of the current practice of routing funds to the Diocese, then to St. Helen's. Timing for Implementation: 1Q 2009.

In the linked or combined scenario, all new OLF parish registrants will receive informational literature about St. Helen's School with the other welcome materials.

A \$200 discount on tuition will be given to members of Saint Helen's Our Lady of Fatima parishes.

St. Helen after school clubs and family fun nights will be open to members of both parishes.

Timing for Implementation: 3Q 2008.

Sacramental Preparation

First Communion and First Reconciliation will be held together when feasible, with St. Helen's School children included. There would be parent meetings, preparatory retreats and joint celebrations, as appropriate. Planned Implementation - School Year 2009-2010.

Summer School and Vacation Bible Study

This will be the 2nd year that we will be offering a Summer Arts and Education Program. This is a 4-week program for children in 1st Grade- 5th Grade and who are currently enrolled at St. Helen's School and/or are St. Helen's or Our Lady of Fatima parishioners. The cost is minimal.

This is a current one-week summer program for children for grades Pre-K – grade 5. In 2007, approximately 40 students enrolled. During the week long intergenerational program where adults and teens together with the younger participants have craft activities, music, food on Bible themes. This program will rotate locations and staff will continue to work collaboratively. Implementation: 2008

Catechetical Sunday

Commissioning at OLF, St. Helen's and St. Helen's School will be linked. Additionally, linking enables the shared benefits of greater resources, videos, and books to further enhance the programs. Implementation 2008-2009

Develop an Intergenerational Faith Event to be shared by OLF, St. Helen's School and St. Helen's. Planned implementation 2008-2009.

3. YOUTH MINISTRY:

There are approximately 330 students in grades 6-11 at St. Helen's and 120 students at OLF grades 6-12. Supporting these 450 students are approximately 95 volunteers (65 at St. Helen's and 31 at OLF) serving in a variety of roles including catechists, aides, Youth Ministry teams, assisting with retreats, substitutes, etc. Currently there is one full-time staff at St. Helen's and one part-time staff at OLF providing management and leadership for these programs. The programs at each parish are similar with both parishes use the same text series, "Total Catechesis Series." (St. Helen's sixth grade uses an additional text). The curriculum content varies by grade between the two parishes. Additionally, OLF has a service ministry requirement for all enrolled in Faith Formation with monthly and at times bi-monthly service opportunities for students.

Since the two parish Youth Ministry programs already work closely together, the next actions for linked program is to develop a calendar of enhanced collaborative efforts between the parishes by planning combined Youth Ministry activities. These activities would emphasize intergenerational activities when possible. Timing: These

activities can be implemented as early as 2008.

Youth Masses:

Plan: 3-4 youth masses throughout the school year together. Alternate worship site, combined participation: music, lectors, ushers, etc. Timing: Implement in 2009

Confirmation:

Confirmation Service Day is day long “retreat” with kids going out in groups to do service. This has been occurring since 2003-2004. The day opens with prayer, disbursing to do service in small groups with an adult (from either parish), return, share experiences and pray. Confirmation Liturgy: collaborate on the liturgy (participants from both parishes), music and “host” parish (this is alternated each year) organizes reception. The rehearsal is done together. Timing: Continued Collaboration: 2008 and beyond

YM Teams:

Work on a few big activities together throughout the year: social, service, retreats. Plan on meeting at the beginning of the school year to look at combined activities. Timing: Implement in 2009.

Ministry Day:

This is a service day activity modeled after the Confirmation one. This is a new activity introduced to both parishes, May 18, 2008. The concept is to invite all age groups to participate in service at the parishes, with other parishioners, extended outreach to service sites like the Mission, or others in need. It will start with mass at 11:30 at OLF, followed by lunch, prayer, dispersing to do service, return to share experiences and conclude with prayer. Timing: Implementation 2008.

Habitat for Humanity House:

Fundraising 5/09

Build in the spring of 2009

Intergenerational: all age groups can do something

Food for workers, morning devotions, building, fundraising, praying, VBS program, “Sunday school” program. Timing: Planning begins 2008 with building in 2009.

Develop an Intergenerational Faith Event (in addition to the Habitat for Humanity House Project) to be shared by OLF, St. Helen’s School and St. Helen’s. Planned implementation 2008-2009.

4. Adult Faith Formation and Enrichment:

There is one staff assigned to the Adult Faith formation processes at OLF. At St. Helen’s, there are multiple persons with different responsibilities depending on the activity. The programs and activities developed for the Adult Faith formation uniquely reflect the needs of the diversity of the two parishes.

All adult groups and activities are now open to anyone of either parish – (or anyone in the larger deanery). The offerings at OLF include the following adult groups: two Scripture/Prayer groups, a Book Group, a Parent and Child Group (a ‘Mom and tot’ type group that also discusses scripture/faith ideas), and a Kindred Spirits (a spiritual direction group). The Adult Faith Formation and Enrichment programs will continue to seek opportunities to enrich the existing programs and

Conduct a Resource and Program Review

Since there are multiple persons involved in varying degrees with the programs at St. Helen’s and one person at OLF assigned this area, a review with the purpose of establishing program responsibility for the two parishes should be established. Timing: Complete by 3Q 2008

Develop a Joint Adult Faith Core Group

This joint committee would provide insight and ideas concerning adult programs and groups. This would enable more of the parishioner talents and needs of the two parishes to be incorporated into the Adult Faith Formation and Enrichment program. It is expected that this group will undergo formation as part of the program start up. Timing: Plan to Hold first meeting 1Q 2009.

RCIA Process

This area was linked in 2007-2008, and offered a fuller experience of welcoming people into our church. This is good both for the team members who now share the ‘work’ involved, but also for the candidates and catechumens; the greater numbers provide a richer experience.

Develop a Network of Adult group Activities with area Deaneries

Incorporate the schedule and information of adult group activities at all the deanery churches in the local area. This could be accomplished a shared communication process (enhanced website, etc). Timing: Implementation Summer 2009.

Sister-Parish Committee

This committee is already linked today. This activity falls under Christian Service and the Adult Faith Formation Leader works with Christian Service to plan the activities and events. It is expected that the programs will continue to seek opportunities to provide assistance where possible. Establish Linked Objectives by 1Q 2009.

Develop an Intergenerational Faith Event to be shared by OLF, St. Helen’s School and St. Helen’s. Planned implementation: 2008-2009.

ACTIONS REQUIRED TO COMBINE FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS:

After reviewing the similarities and differences between the two parishes Faith Formation and Sacrament preparation programs, it is possible for the programs to be combined in

the future. In a combined Program, there would be one program area but with two sites.

While the need eliminate redundancy and duplication of expenses and resources, improve planning events and calendars are vital, there are several major considerations that are needed before combining the two parish Faith Formation and Sacrament Programs occurs:

Developing a plan to align curriculum where differences exist and plan a transitional year to bring consistency in course content; this would include changes to the school age programs and for the Youth ministry 6-12 programs. Timing for completion: 2010
Begin preparing the parish participants for change that is inevitable, but gradual and deliberate. Timing: Begin 2009 – ongoing through combined process.

- ❖ Determining staffing and volunteer needs for the combined parish Faith Formation programs. Timing for completion: 2010:
- ❖ Developing schedules to accommodate the limited classroom space available which also considers the needs of families with children spanning different faith formation ages due to scheduling. Timing for Completion: 2010
- ❖ Developing a centralized registration process which may include web-based registration. Timing for Completion: 2011

These steps would lead to a full combination of the two parishes Faith Formation Programs beginning in 2012.

Prayer & Worship Committee

Prayer and Worship and Sacramental Preparation

The leadership change that occurred in early 2007 at both parishes enabled us to begin our efforts toward greater linkages well in advance of 2009. The simultaneous departures of both pastors resulted in the assignment of Fr. Bob Longobucco as the administrator at St. Helen's and the sacramental minister at Our Lady of Fatima. This has led to the coordination of mass schedules and the discussion of other linkage opportunities. We have since been engaged in a process of discerning the complementary giftedness, talents, styles and attitudes of the community of the two parishes. In so doing, we have thoughtfully and prayerfully explored many ways to respect and honor the unique personality of each parish while deepening our collaboration in serving the needs of God's people. Considering what has already been implemented along with our plans and recommendations for further linkages, we believe this process will serve to energize and revitalize our endeavor to be Church.

Things that have already been implemented:

- ❖ Mass schedules for weekend as well as weekday liturgies have been coordinated.
- ❖ Liturgy schedules for Holy Days have been coordinated.
- ❖ Confirmation is planned and celebrated jointly.
- ❖ Anointing of the Sick is celebrated jointly.
- ❖ Advent and Lenten penance services are celebrated jointly.
- ❖ RCIA programs have been combined.
- ❖ Annual Blessing of the Animals is offered at both parishes.
- ❖ The Easter *Triduum* is planned and celebrated jointly with the 2008 Holy Thursday liturgy being held at St. Helen's, Good Friday liturgies being held at both parishes, and the Easter Vigil being celebrated at Our Lady of Fatima with RCIA candidates from both parishes receiving the sacraments together.
- ❖ Stations of the Cross are alternated between the parishes during Lent.
- ❖ Liturgy Teams from both parishes meet periodically to coordinate shared liturgies.
- ❖ Guest speakers are invited to address joint meeting of both parishes to discuss liturgical and sacramental topics.
- ❖ The joint adoption of our sister parish in Mexico has provided opportunities for prayer and cultural discovery: for example, a devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Proposed linkages for 2009 -2010:

Enhance our joint Children's Liturgy of the Word by making it a monthly offering held at each parish on alternating months. We would like to incorporate the talents of our music ministries into this program. This proposal would require coordination with the Faith Formation programs of the parishes and announcement in bulletins.

Hold joint commissioning during Mass of all who sign up to serve in the many

ministries of the parishes. This would occur in the late Fall after the early Fall sign-up period.

Encourage and facilitate the people of the two parishes getting to know each other by holding a few social events at which all who serve on the various committees will join together to meet outside of Mass. This would be an expansion of the current St. Helen's events to include Our Lady of Fatima.

Ministers of the Word and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist from both parishes attend joint training sessions and serve at both parishes.

Establish a Bell Choir comprising members of both parishes to perform at combined liturgies including Christmas and Easter.

Celebrate Holy Thursday at Our Lady of Fatima and the Easter Vigil at St. Helen's for 2009.

Celebrate Holy Thursday at St. Helen's and the Easter Vigil at Our Lady of Fatima for 2010.

Proposed linkages for 2011 – 2013:

Continue all of the items listed above.

Form a Ministry of Paraliturgical Services to serve the needs of those people of God unable to attend services in our facilities. We would like to offer prayer services, music ministry, rosary, reconciliation, anointing, and Eucharist to the residents of the many nursing, assisted-living, and rehabilitation facilities in our community.

Participate in deanery programs to serve the Schenectady County Jail and Ellis Hospital. Offer the Word of God and the Eucharist to the youth of our community through deanery youth masses.

Christian Service Committee

Reconfiguration - The Christian Service and Social Justice Ministries of St Helen's and Our Lady of Fatima would be combined to strengthen each parish's service to our parishioners and neighbors. The goal is to minimize duplication and maximize resources in providing service to our parishes and the wider community.

Each parish currently responds to their community's needs and will continue to do so. In some cases this will be through common practices to be established. In other instances, this will be done using means already in place to best suit the persons in need.

People to be served:

Christian Service and Pastoral Care: These ministries provide direct service to those people living within the parish communities of St Helen's and Our Lady of Fatima, as well as outreach to those in the larger community.

Social Justice: Inspired by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, members provide educational information to parishioners on issues and actively participate in causes specific to Schenectady County and New York State, as well as national and international issues.

Sister Parish: The goal of this ministry is to expand and strengthen the relationship with the parish of San Agustin in Mexico through assessment, service and open communication. Our relationship with this parish, with three sites, has been in place for approximately five years.

PROGRAM PLAN

- I. Complete the identification of the various activities and ministries falling under the umbrella of Christian Service, Pastoral Care and Social Justice in both parishes.
 - ❖ Complete listings of current activities, identifying frequency of service, personnel requirements (including staff and volunteers), building on Attachments I and II of current offerings
 - ❖ Analyze activities within each ministry listed to determine common nomenclature and if any overlap exists
 - ❖ Compile comprehensive description of ministries in four areas:
 - Pastoral Care e.g. ministering to hospital, nursing home, homebound; compassion team and bereavement
 - Christian Service e.g. direct service in basic needs, soup kitchen, food programs
 - Social Justice e.g. encouraging systemic change in light of Catholic Social teaching
 - Sister Parish Relationship e.g. medical mission
- GOAL DATE JUNE 2008

- II. Communication to the parishes about reconfigured ministries

- ❖ Increase communication in both parishes to proactively keep/ increase our support in current and growing areas.
- ❖ Bulletin inserts bulletin boards, informational meetings, donation envelopes, *In God's House* newsletter
- ❖ "Come and See" activities e.g. shadow someone in a specific ministry
- ❖ "Ministry Fair"- information and sign up opportunity on same weekend in each location opening all existing ministries to members of either parish.
- ❖ Parish coffee- sponsored events providing information and feedback
- ❖ Sister Parish - continued regular communication on events, progresses and needs; Father Massimo usually visits annually

Acknowledge those participating and encourage feedback

GOAL DATE SEPT 2008

III. Evaluation of progress in combining / configuring ministries

- ❖ Continue prospering programs and revisit programs that need adjustment

GOAL DATE DEC 2009

IV. Identification of new areas of need by means of survey, bulletin, word of mouth

- ❖ Identify unmet needs such as jail ministry, service to special populations living within our parishes (widows, service men/women, immigrants, mentally disabled, etc)
- ❖ Advocate for those needing assistance, living alone
- ❖ Match resources with unmet needs

GOAL DATE JUNE 2009

V. Administration of Christian Service/Pastoral Care

- ❖ Regular joint meetings of existing staff in both parishes

GOAL DATE MAY 2008

- ❖ Coordination of ministry lists by existing staff in each parish
- ❖ Coordination of lists of participants in each ministry (New lists updated after each Ministry Sunday)

GOAL DATE OCT 2008

Determine Whether a Reorganization or Job Restructuring of Parish Personnel is required. It is possible for the staff of both parishes to continue to serve in the same capacities without changing reporting relationships, payroll, or job responsibilities. However, an examination of job descriptions and duties is required to uncover any job restructuring that may need to occur. The objective of the job review would be to uncover opportunities to eliminate duplicative efforts and redundancy and reconfigure personnel to best serve parishes in a linked arrangement.

GOAL DATE MARCH 2009

VI. Financial Support Requirements

- Materials and Supplies - budget coordination and joint purchasing of supplies
GOAL DATE MARCH 2009

VII. Ministry Specific training and education

- Identify existing Ministry training programs in each parish
- Identify community and deanery area training programs relevant to each ministry
GOAL DATE JUNE 2008
- Conduct joint training programs as needed for each ministry
GOAL DATE AFTER OCT 2008 SIGN UPS

VIII Catholic Social Teaching and Call to Action

- Heighten awareness by:
 - ❖ Parish and community level education programs
 - ❖ General Catholic social teaching education programs
 - ❖ Specific issue oriented programs
 - ❖ Greater use of the bulletin, informational programs
 - ❖ Connection with religious education and youth ministry programs
 - ❖ Call to action in response to tenets of Catholic Social Teaching
 - ❖ Linkage with Catholic Charities of the Diocese and the New York Catholic Conference concerning important public policy issues
 - ❖ Linkage with Catholic Charities of Schenectady County and SICM with respect to advocacy issues and emerging system issues in the county
 - ❖ Connection with current religious education and youth ministry programs.
 - ❖ Activities to encourage "Faithful Citizenship" and ongoing interest and participation in the public policy debate
 - ❖ Review feasibility of combining Social Justice Committees
GOAL DATE ONGOING

IX. Sister Parish Relationship

- Continue to coordinate and inform parishes of plans, progress and goals
GOAL DATE ONGOING

X. Christian Service/ Social Justice in parishes through Youth Religious Education and Youth Ministry program interaction e.g. Confirmation Service Day, SALT, Soup Kitchen assistance, Valentines for Vets, 10th grade program at St Helen's on Social Justice, planned Youth Action Service Day

GOAL DATE ONGOING

Church Administration & Finance Committee

The members of the Administration and Finance Committee have met regularly and prayerfully considered the possibilities of merging and/or linking the administration and finance functions of the parishes of Our Lady of Fatima and St. Helen's.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee reviewed the administration and financial components of the following areas under the Called to be Church guidelines:

- ❖ Pastoral Planning
- ❖ Stewardship
- ❖ Human Resources
- ❖ Information Technology/Data Management
- ❖ Facility Management

Both parishes have similar administration and financial practices, many of which are mandated by the Diocese. Both parishes are also financially viable as they have consistently met budgeted revenue goals and met and/or exceeded the Bishop's Appeal assessments set by the Diocese year after year.

The parishes make good use of existing facilities and, in the case of the convent building at St. Helen's, have a plan in place to sublet unused space and utilize the additional space to support the activities of their Youth Ministry.

Listed below are action items under each of the categories listed above. Many of these action items could be acted on to further link the shared work and mission of our parishes. If the parishes were to merge at a future point in time, some form of all the below action items would take place and/or receive serious consideration.

PASTORAL PLANNING

Pastoral Council: The administrations of the two parishes should be further linked by having a Pastoral Council representative (preferably the Pastoral Council Presidents) from each parish sit on each other's Council. This would help in improving communications and linking the two parishes. If a merger between the two parishes were to take place, both existing Pastoral Councils would be merged into one body.

Timeframe: This could be implemented beginning in 2009.

Mission Statement: Both parishes should work together to develop one comprehensive Mission Statement reflecting the shared goals and mission of the LPG.

Timeframe: This could be implemented beginning in 2009.

Long Range Plan: The Local Planning Group (LPG) should work in unison to develop a comprehensive 5-year plan incorporating all aspects of the action items developed through the Called to be Church process. Continuing efforts toward continued linkage of the two parishes in the LPG as well as the potential of a future merger should be addressed in this plan.

Timeframe: The LPG could embark on creating this plan beginning in 2009.

Church Bulletin: The LPG should develop one bulletin for distribution at all weekend masses held in the LPG. Each parish could have their own page as well as shared pages listing all events, activities, Pastoral columns, and Mass schedules.

Timeframe: The feasibility of issuing one bulletin will be reviewed in 2009-10.

STEWARDSHIP

Bishop's Appeal: Both parishes in the LPG have consistently met or exceeded their Diocesan assessment for the Bishop's Appeal. Short-term, we recommend that separate assessments continue to be assigned to each parish in the LPG. However, as the parishes continue to link services and merge programs, we recognize that one assessment for the LPG, set by the Diocese, may be prudent.

Timeframe: This will be an ongoing issue which could be addressed over the next 5-7 years.

Joint Endowment: The parishes in the LPG should consider establishment of a joint endowment fund. The endowment could also possibly be used to facilitate a future merger of the parishes and meet capital needs which may arise through that possible merger.

Timeframe: Initial steps toward establishing a joint endowment will be investigated in 2009-10.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Personnel Policy Handbook: Both parishes in the LPG should develop one handbook addressing personnel matters for staff of both parishes.

Timeframe: Begin in 2009.

Staff Performance Evaluation: The performance evaluation process for staff should be formalized and standardized between both parishes.

Timeframe: Begin in 2009.

Staffing: It is possible for the staff of both parishes to continue to serve in the same

capacities without changing reporting relationships, payroll, or job responsibilities. However, an examination of job descriptions and duties is required to uncover any job restructuring that may need to occur. The objective of a job review would be to uncover opportunities to eliminate duplicative efforts and redundancy and reconfigure personnel to best serve the parishes in a linked arrangement.

Timeframe: Begin in 2009 and ongoing.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/DATA MANAGEMENT

Telecommunications: One telecommunications service provider should be chosen to serve the administration needs of the parishes in the LPG. This will better facilitate linkage of programs and services. We recognize that some software is already standardized per the Diocese (esp. Financial Reporting).

By developing one phone system and one computer network for the parishes in the LPG, this would allow for better work flow if LPG staff needed to support each other during low staffing periods. For example, if the LPG had one phone system, calls could be answered at OLF and transferred to St. Helen's if they did not have a secretary working. One computer network would allow staff members from both parishes to access the shared database or documents if needed.

Timeframe: Begin investigating options in 2009.

Database Management: One common database should be developed for both parishes in the LPG. This would make it possible for staff from both parishes to support each other during staff shortages (illness, vacation, etc.) and ease potential merger of the LPG parishes if considered in the future.

Timeframe: Form an IT Committee to investigate in 2009.

Web Site: Both parishes currently have a web site. Effort should be undertaken to update and provide linkage between the two sites.

Timeframe: Begin in 2009 and ongoing