

Christmas 2013

Holy Spirit Community Newsletter



Advent and Christmas Blessings to All!

I hope all are enjoying the rising anticipation and excitement of the Advent season! Advent reminds us that God blessed us with a savior! Now, we anticipate Christ returning in glory.

Pope Francis calls us to be ever open to an encounter with Christ. Where can you encounter Jesus? By making more time for prayer and reflection? Attending Mass and sharing in the Eucharist? Spending time with family or neighbors; being patient and generous with love and service? How you encounter others helps your encounter with Jesus!

How will you spend 2014? LIFT, Faith Formation and Holy Spirit School provide opportunities for faith and enrichment. Celebrating Mass as part of a community helps you encounter Jesus in Word and Sacrament. You will find peace and be his witness to the world. Your encounter with Jesus makes all things new.

I want to acknowledge the good work that our Facilities Planning Committee has accomplished in the last two years. It sought input, by asking you to identify our community's needs, and devised a plan to provide us with more space to help our Holy Spirit community meet the pastoral, formational and spiritual needs of our people and the larger community. Please listen to our committee members, as their work betters our community.

There is much to celebrate, many reasons for hope! Enjoy many blessings for Christmas and the New Year!

Fr. Joe O'Brien

Master Plan: Planning for the Next 90 Years!

It is an exciting time for our community! This year, we celebrate our parish's 90th anniversary; and, in 2012, we celebrated Holy Spirit School's 50th anniversary. Now, we continue the Master Plan process as we plan our next 90 years. The 1991 church expansion and 2001 middle school addition addressed specific needs for the worship space and the school. Our current Master Plan addresses the total needs of the Holy Spirit community—parish and school.

Phase III of the Master Plan—the development of program accommodation alternatives—was submitted to the diocese in August and approved in October. Phase IV of the plan focuses on consensus building among community members. On Nov. 23, community members joined Holy Spirit's Facilities Planning Committee members and architect Paul Mays of Butler Rowland Mays

Architects, LLP, based in Ballston Spa, to discuss a design to update our campus—the church, parish house and school—to meet our growing spiritual, pastoral and educational needs. At the meeting, Mays presented a conceptual design and discussed campus improvements and future possibilities to meet our growing needs for intergenerational faith formation, active ministries and academic advancement. Mike Piatek, Holy Spirit School principal, and Kathy Rosenbaum, parish associate, illustrated community needs and shared ideas to address those needs.

The Master Plan is a blueprint for Holy Spirit's future growth. The first implementation phase of the plan allows for the construction of **Spirit Hall**, a multipurpose space adjacent to the school library, alongside the sidewalk leading from the school to the church. **Spirit Hall** will provide much needed

space for after-Mass hospitalities, academic sessions, retreats, programs and meetings, as well as expansion of the technology center used for both school and parish programs. This first phase will include: plumbing and ventilation improvements in the church; roof replacement and fire alarm system in the Parish House; and, technology and library improvements in the school. Future phases might include additional construction and improvements based on community needs and the available financial resources. Features of future projects to be considered include: Church narthex extension and elevator/stairs to Spirit Hall; Parish House workspace improvements; school/pre-school playground improvements; school classroom and technology improvements; church lighting and Sanctuary improvements; and, site and
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Selecting Albany's Next Bishop

In keeping with church practice, Bishop Howard Hubbard upon his 75th birthday on Oct. 30 submitted a letter requesting retirement to Pope Francis. Pope Francis has yet to accept Bishop Hubbard's request. Bishops generally continue serving their diocese until a new bishop is named by the pope and installed. It may be some time until Pope Francis selects a new bishop for Albany. After Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester retired in July 2012, an administrator was named in September 2012 to oversee the diocese. Salvator Matano was selected as the new bishop in mid-November 2013. Cardinal Francis George of

Chicago turned age 75 nearly two years ago, and his successor is yet to be named.

Time and care goes into a bishop's selection. The apostolic nuncio (the pope's U.S. representative) asks local clergy, religious and lay persons familiar with the diocese and its people, and bishops throughout the state to submit names of those they believe would serve the diocese well. Candidates may also include priests or bishops who were under consideration to be named a bishop in another diocese. Names are then forwarded to the Congregation of Bishops, a Vatican office that advises the pope, which submits

three names, in rank order, to the pope, who may choose from these three or request new nominees. After the pope selects a candidate, the nuncio then asks if he will accept the pope's invitation to serve the People of God as a shepherd of a diocese

Pope Francis stated that he wants "meek, patient and merciful" candidates. Bishop Hubbard said individuals may write to Archbishop Carlo Vigano, the U.S. apostolic nuncio, to suggest candidate names, and calls on us to pray to the Holy Spirit to aid in the selection of a new shepherd for Albany.—Fr. Joe O'Brien

*Master Plan,**Continued from page 1*

parking improvements. All plans allow for day and night time facility use and school security. (Watch the parish and school web sites and parish *Bulletin* for periodic updates.).

For your convenient review, we enclosed the Phase 1 Master Plan design and specific information. We invite your comments and participation. More detailed information about the Holy Spirit Community Master Plan, may be viewed in the Parish Office during office hours, M-F 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Please call the office at 477-7925 to schedule a time. You may also contact any Facilities Planning Committee member: Fr. Joe O'Brien at frjoe@holyspiritchurcheg.org; Kevin Haggerty, co-chair, at khaggerty@flexelectric.com; Bob Picco, co-chair, at rmpicco@gmail.com; Rob Feldman at rfeldma1@nycap.rr.com; Jim Graham at jgraham@synthesisllp.com; Mary Beth Hofmeister at hofs3@earthlink.net; Mike Piatek at mpiatek@hsseg.com; Kathy Rosenbaum at kathy@holyspiritchurcheg.org; and, Meaghan Rossbach at meaghanlm@gmail.com.

—Kathy Rosenbaum

2013 Tax Planning

If you would like to make a year-end donation as a pre-pledge for Phase 1 of the Master Plan, including **Spirit Hall**, please contact Fr. Joe O'Brien at 477-7925 or frjoe@holyspiritchurcheg.org. There are tax-planning opportunities for year-end giving, including the extension through 2013 of the ability to make direct gifts from an IRA to a qualified charity. These Qualified Charitable Distributions can be used to meet Required Minimum Distributions and are excluded from gross income.

Cylon George and Holy Spirit's Music Ministry

According to Cylon George, Holy Spirit's parish music director, the church and music have always been a part of his life, so it was natural he felt called to Holy Spirit's Music Ministry.

"Music is an integral part of Mass," noted George. "It's not just an add-on, which is a view often held—that music is something separate. Holy Spirit's Music Ministry invites people to participate in worship through singing. But (it) also invites people to listen and reflect spiritually. St. Augustine said, 'When we sing, we pray twice.' So, music is really part of prayer."

According to George, he expresses his faith through music, and music is the primary way he prays. "Music is a primal, emotional thing," he added. "Whether singing or listening, you rarely find someone who doesn't like any (type of) music... The church wisely taps into (people's) love of music."

As Holy Spirit's music director, George coordinates all the music heard in the church, which includes: directing the children's (generally second graders through middle schoolers), teen's (generally high schoolers) and adult (generally age 18 and up) choirs and all the instrumentalists; directing and coordinating cantors; recruiting choir and instrumental volunteers; teaching and rehearsing; and, singing during Mass and at other church events.

George emphasized that the choirs, etc., are open to all with some kind of musical ability. "No one's been turned away,"



he said. "There is not an elaborate audition process. There are no try outs. People are welcome to join, and, from what they see and hear, they are pretty good at matching their ability (to ours)."

George also emphasized that at Holy Spirit, the Music Ministry holds no hard and fast rules. If a parishioner with exceptional music ability wants to participate in a specific choir or event, George finds a way to incorporate him or her into that area. For instance, he noted, while the teen choir generally includes high schoolers, at present, there is a musically talented and mature teenager singing with the adult choir.

Holy Spirit's music director since 2004, George said he accomplished several goals, including involving more of the parish community in music during Mass, growing the choirs, and offering music opportunities that encompass almost every age group. His ongoing goals include continuing to grow the ministry and encouraging new recruits. "I want to make sure the choirs are there for years to come," he stated. "We need fresh voices coming in. I want to ensure that what we've built is lasting." In addition, George seeks to continue expanding the

ministry's repertoire, performing different music and adding more instruments.

"The Music Ministry is really all of us," George said. "It's not just the choir up there, because the celebration is so much more rich and special with all singing. I would rather have all of us singing than have that one special voice. Our liturgy calls us to participate during Mass. Singing is active worship, not a performance."

Raised in Trinidad and Tobago, George has been a New York State resident since 2000 and holds undergraduate degrees in music and computer science from Hartwick College and a master's degree in pastoral studies from St. Bernard's. In addition to his part-time work as Holy Spirit music director, George works full time as campus minister with Hudson Valley Community College and Sage Colleges.

"My love was always with music," said George, who lives in Albany with his wife and their five children ranging in ages from 10 years to seven months. "I love what I do and consider it a privilege to serve. I am happy to serve at the pleasure of God and the parish. As long as God lets me do this, I will."

According to George, music takes on special significance during the Christmas and Easter seasons, which, he noted, are "great times for people to examine their gifts and step forward" to join the Music Ministry.

Parishioners wishing to join the Music Ministry may contact George at the parish office at 477-7925 or cylon.george@gmail.com.

On Christmas Eve, come hear the Teen's Choir at our 4 p.m. Mass and Children's Choir at our 6 p.m. Mass. Join the Adult Choir for carols at 7:45 p.m. and Mass at 8:30 p.m.

School Update

It seems that in a blink of an eye we have gone from Labor Day to the Christmas season. Here are some of the exciting things that have happened during that time at Holy Spirit School (HSS).

We welcomed five new teachers to HSS: Ms. Occhiogrosso (Spanish); Ms. Wladarczyk (Library and Technology); Mrs. Silsby (Middle School Math); Mrs. Valley (Middle School Science/Math); and, Mrs. LoGiudice (Grade 3).

Our active Parent School Association (PSA) continues to support us. The PSA sponsored the Hair of the Dog concert, organized our Race for Education and Family Liturgy/Pasta Dinner; and, planned our Breakfast with Santa, held on Nov. 30.

From a technology standpoint, HSS added interactive Smartboards in grades K-4 and purchased 10 additional iPads, giving us 30 iPads for student use. Our web site, www.hsseg.com, is being



rebuilt to provide our school community a lot of information.

Our middle school students visited the Patroon Land Farm of the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York in Voorheesville and harvested, cleaned and sorted vegetables for distribution to local shelters and food banks.

Eighth grade students are conducting bake sales every Friday with proceeds going to Breast Cancer Research, Peter's Farm in Castleton and Catholic Charities. Our Student Government is planning fundraising projects to aid the typhoon-ravaged Philippines. We also worked with the parish to collect applesauce for CoNSERNs-U Thanksgiving baskets.

Our eighth graders are also traveling by train in this month to New York City for the Radio City Christmas Show.

Along with Fr. Joe O'Brien, our students taped two liturgies for the "Table of the Lord" program broadcast on local TV channels.

As usual, everything we do at HSS—from morning/afternoon prayers, classroom religious education, weekly schoolwide prayer services, and liturgies with Fr. Joe—frames our strong educational program.

There are many families that would like their children to attend HSS but are restricted financially. If you are interested in helping to fund a child's tuition (being a "HSS saint"), please call HSS at 477-5739.

As we prepare for the birth of our savior, we hope that that special Christmas feeling stays with your family and you all year long. Blessings to all.

Servire cum Laetitia (to serve with joy)—*Michael Piatek*

Upcoming Events

12/15: St. Catherine's Copson House Dinner (Contact Tracey, 477-7925, to help), St. Catherine's Copson House, 3 p.m.-5 p.m. (Helpers should be on hand through 5:30 p.m.)

12/19: "Lessons and Carols" presented by the Ministries of the local Catholic parishes, St. John's/St. Joseph's, Rensselaer, 7:30 p.m.-9 p.m.

12/23: Church Greening, Holy Spirit Church, 3 p.m.-6 p.m.

12/24: Christmas Eve Masses, Holy Spirit Church, 4 p.m. (Teen's Choir) & 6 p.m. (Children's Choir); 7:45 p.m. Carols; 8:30 p.m. (Adult Choir)

12/25: Christmas Day Mass, Holy Spirit Church, 10 a.m.

12/30: St. Catherine's Copson House Christmas Party, Holy Spirit School gym, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. (Contact Tracey, 477-7925, to help)

Advent Reconciliation Services

12/12: St. Henry's, Averill Park, 7 p.m.

12/16: St. Mary's, Clinton Heights, 6:30 p.m.

12/19: St. John's/St. Joseph's, Rensselaer, 12:10 p.m.

Please check the enclosed post card for a complete listing of Masses for the Christmas Season.

Act of Service Is Act of Love



To honor Bishop Howard Hubbard's 50 years of Priestly Service to the people of the Albany Diocese and follow in his footsteps of helping God's people in need, Holy Spirit parishioners participated in Samaritan's Purse Christmas Child. Each year, Samaritan's Purse, a service organization, sponsor's a program—Christmas Child. Participants collect small items, enough to fill a shoe box, which can be mailed to children throughout the world as a Christmas present. The shoe box can be for a girl or a boy, from 3-14 years. Gift items include small toys, socks, sandals, prayer cards, school supplies and toiletries. This year, Holy Spirit parishioners assembled 38 boxes. The children receiving these boxes got an extra surprise—one kind and talented parishioner crocheted small dolls, hand puppets and balls that were included in each box! Many parishioners registered their boxes online, enabling them to track where the boxes were shipped. We look forward to participating in Christmas Child in fall 2014. This has been an exciting time for our community, and we are blessed to have been shepherded by Bishop Hubbard—he is faith in action!—*Kathy Rosenbaum*

We're on the Web!
www.holyspiritchurcheg.org or
www.holyspiritchurcheg.com.

Sacramental Preparation

So much grace and so many blessings occurred as part of Holy Spirit's Sacramental Preparation this fall!

This September, Sacramental Preparation offered candidates and sponsors an afternoon of reflection on the sacrament of Confirmation. It was an awesome day of sharing faith. Eighty people gathered to complete preparation for the celebration of Confirmation with Bishop Howard Hubbard on Oct. 25, held at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Albany. Thirty-seven teens from our parish were fully initiated into the church!

Letters concerning Confirmation were recently sent to current sophomore students. Young people interested in immediate preparing for Confirmation in 2014 must: be at least a current high school sophomore; attend LIFT and Mass regularly; and, enter the preparation process of their choice.

In October, we also began preparation for the sacrament of Reconciliation with parent meetings and a retreat day. Children celebrate Reconciliation this month, and, in early 2014, begin preparation for Eucharist.

Never fear you have missed something—all are welcome any time! To learn more about sacraments at Holy Spirit, please contact Beth Carlin at 518-477-7925 or beth@holyspiritchurch.org.

Sacramental preparation is available for all. Whether you seek sacramental preparation for a family member, friend or yourself, please contact Beth Carlin or Fr. Joe O'Brien at 518.477.7925.

LIFT: Living Faith, Catching Faith

Parents, you have the privilege of being the first and primary means of sharing faith with your child. **Faith that is lived is faith that is caught.** Children will catch faith as it is lived in the home. This may seem daunting at times, yet seeing your child's faith development can be one of the greatest joys of parenthood. You are not alone in this important task; we will walk with you!

We encourage families to speak with us about what works for your family, what challenges you, and how we may help. Supplemental materials are available, too! Have an idea about sharing faith with your child? Share it with us, and let's make it a reality for all families!

Need inspiration? Check out our Pinterest board for ideas to celebrate Advent. Find us at <http://www.pinterest.com/holyspiritlift/>.

Looking for some spiritual reading for your child and/or you? Consider borrowing a book from our parish library! Requests to borrow books can be emailed to maria@holyspiritchurch.org or telephoned to 477-7925. Browse the titles at <http://tinyurl.com/liftlibrary>.

Wonder how to get started in sharing faith with your child? Join us on Dec. 14 at 9:30 a.m. in the Parish Office for a babies' & toddlers' Pray & Play Date, a great opportunity to connect with other parents and caregivers. It also can aid children in developing a sense of belonging to our community! Contact maria@holyspiritchurch.org to join our contact list.

Want to participate in our online community? Read what's happening on our parish blog and offer comments—share your wisdom with others! Go to <http://tinyurl.com/HSFFblog>.

Join us for Cookies & Carols, a sing-a-long for those of us who can't sing but seek the simple joys of Christmas, on Saturday, Dec. 21, at 6:30 p.m. in the school gym. Our hymns are rooted in scripture; singing and memorizing them helps the Gospel take root in us!

LIFT—Cycling Through the Liturgical Year

We are well underway in our journey to learn more about the seasons of the Liturgical Year. In September, "An Extra-ordinary Time" focused on the feasts and celebrations of the Liturgical Year, specifically those centered on October observances of the Archangels, Guardian Angels and St. Francis of Assisi. In October, "In the Community of the Communion of Saints" we focused on the November celebrations of All Saints and All Souls and the ways we share in the Communion of Saints. In November, "O Come All Ye Faithful" we focused on the seasons of Advent and Christmas—ways we prepare for and celebrate Jesus' incarnation.

Join our next gathering, "Blinded by the Light", on Jan. 6, 8 and 12 at the Holy Spirit Church and school. We will celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul and his missionary journeys that brought the faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to far reaching areas of the world. LIFT Gatherings are intergenerational and for anyone and everyone in the parish. Gatherings are from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Contact the Parish Office or go to www.holyspiritchurch.org to register. All are welcome!

RCIA

Holy Spirit Church has two participants preparing to receive the sacraments through Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), the process for bringing non-Christians and Christians of other faith traditions into the Catholic Church with scripture study and faith sharing: one is seeking Baptism and the other Confirmation and Eucharist. Look for RCIA rites celebrations at Mass. The Rite of Acceptance introduces RCIA participants to the community, which, for these participants, was celebrated on Nov. 24. During the Rite of Acceptance, the community prays for RCIA participants as they prepare for the sacraments. We look forward to the Rite of Election, the church's formal process to accept participants into receiving the Sacraments of Initiation, the first Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Albany, and the reception of the sacraments at the Easter Vigil. Additional rites include three scrutinies—prayers and blessings—which are planned for the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of Lent. —*Bill Dringus*