

The Navigator

The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
Volume VI, No. 3 – Summer 2011

What Is Saint Brendan's?

Fr. Alan L. Andraeas, Prior

NOTE: This will be a different kind of newsletter. No articles, few pictures, no ancient Church Fathers. Instead, as a Fellowship, we're going to review what it is that we all belong to. What exactly IS Saint Brendan's? This newsletter is a slightly adapted version of a paper I had to write as a defense of this ministry for a doctoral-level course I'm taking through the seminary arm of Liberty University. The course is "Church Management" and this paper had to focus on our target population, staffing requirements, remuneration policies, and future goals. As you can imagine, a monastic retreat community is not quite the same thing as a full-service evangelical church. We thought we would use this issue to remind you of who we are, what we are, and why we are.

An Overview:

Saint Brendan's is not a church. We are a "religious community" serving God in the monastic tradition of Saint Benedict. That makes us sound like we're Roman Catholic. We're not that, either, although we are *catholic* (lowercase 'c') in that we appeal to the consensual teachings of the Church as defined by the first four ecumenical councils. And while our *shape* is Benedictine, our *ethos* is traced through the Celtic influence of the early English/Irish saints (Aidan, Chad, Columba, Patrick, Brendan, etc.). But that's not all.

Saint Brendan's is under the "episcopal cover" of the United Anglican Church; a small, evangelical, conservative, Anglo-Catholic communion. This episcopal oversight means that Saint Brendan's is not an

independent ministry but is "under obedience" to a diocesan bishop and a national primate. Accordingly, our rules and protocols are all found within the Canons (i.e., "church law") of the United Anglican Church. And there's more.

Like the UAC at-large, Saint Brendan's is fiercely *evangelical*. Everything we do is a proclamation of the glory of Jesus Christ by living it out in our private and common faith. Saint Brendan's is also fiercely *conservative* in its theology and polity (e.g., literal creation, physical return of Christ, homosexuals are not to be ordained, no same-sex marriages, the ordained priesthood is for men only, etc.). Saint Brendan's is equally *charismatic* in its understanding of the role and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the individual's life and in the Church's corporate life – for service, witnessing, edification, corroboration of the Gospel message, and worship. And there's still more.

Saint Brendan's is *ecumenical*. Its lay monastic Oblate program is blessed with membership from Pentecostal, Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Disciples of Christ, Lutheran, Congregational, Brethren, and independent Gospel churches, with each member sensing a call to discover, learn, practice, and grow in the ancient spiritual disciplines of intentional holiness. There's just a little bit more.

Finally, Holy Trinity Chapel at Saint Brendan's is liturgical and sacramental by grounding its patterns of worship in the ancient liturgies of the Church. We believe that historical liturgy is neither dead nor alive but true or false. True liturgy must reflect the eternal patterns of heavenly wor-

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE OF "THE NAVIGATOR"

What Is Saint Brendan's	1
Monastic Muse	3
It's On Amazon	7
Welcome to New Members	7

“Our ‘snapshot’, then is truly multifaceted. In short,...Anglo-Catholic...monastic...ecumenical... Benedictine...Celtic...liturgical...sacramental... evangelical...charismatic...ancient spiritual disciplines...interior and exterior holiness.”

ship just as the Tabernacle and Temple were also patterned after heavenly worship. These liturgical patterns, however, are expressed through a charismatic participation with the Holy Spirit (e.g., laying hands on the sick, receiving and sharing words of knowledge, etc.) along with ancient and contemporary praise, thus effecting a fusion or convergence of worship traditions within one setting.

Our ‘snapshot’, then, is truly multifaceted. In short, Saint Brendan’s is an Anglo-Catholic monastic and Oblate ecumenical mission in the Benedictine and Celtic traditions expressing its corporate adoration of God through a convergence of the liturgical, sacramental, evangelical, and charismatic forms of worship as well as the intentional practice of those ancient spiritual disciplines which seek to produce interior and exterior holiness in its membership. That is the ‘essence’ of our identity. So how do we put all of this into practice, and why?

History and Development:

Saint Brendan’s began with my wife’s and my own spiritual journeys. Briefly, my wife was raised as an Evangelical United Brethren with strong community and faith ties to the surrounding Mennonite and Pennsylvania Dutch families near her home. Her church was eventually absorbed by the Methodists in the ‘United Methodist’ merger of the 60’s. I was raised in military chapels but also had exposure to my parents’ own religious traditions which were Lutheran and Episcopalian. I gave my heart to the Lord when I was 14 years old in a Mennonite church that had just experienced the “charismatic renewal.” From there I attended an Assemblies of God Bible college and a Brethren seminary, student pastored in a Congregational church and an Evangelical and Reformed Church (which eventually merged with the United Church of Christ), was ordained by the Assemblies of God for military chaplaincy, and while in that capacity came full circle to my liturgical roots through my reception into the Charismatic Episcopal Church.

It was within the CEC that my wife and I discovered a ‘prayer society’ that encouraged its members to

observe the ancient daily ‘offices’ of monastic prayer (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, or the more complete *Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline*, etc.). This was also accompanied with the encouragement and expectation to practice the ancient monastic disciplines of intentional spirituality (e.g., fasting, solitude, silence, *lectio divina*, simplicity, confession, etc.) in order to cultivate a life of “lay monasticism” – in other words, “how to be a monk and not leave your day job.”

We entered this society and began to work through its various levels of ‘oblation’ (a term borrowed from the system of advancement and growth in monasteries when one enters as a Postulant and is finally received into vowed religious life). Upon my retirement from military chaplaincy, the bishops of the CEC transferred the authority of this society to my wife and me. I was installed as the “Father Superior” and my wife as the “Mother Prioress.”

The Oblate program was designed to help “members at-large” grow in their imitation of Christ through prayer and spiritual discipline within the framework of monastic stages of progress. When I retired from military service, we received our bishops’ approval to settle on a small homestead in coastal Maine with the mission of not only overseeing this nationwide Oblate program by phone, internet, and mail, but to also open our home as a place of monastic hospitality, life, and retreat under a contemporary adaptation of Benedictine monasticism (i.e., *The Rule of St. Benedict*). As a result, *Saint Brendan’s Monastic Retreat Community* (the physical location) and the *Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s* (the nation-wide Oblate program) were born.

of monastic stages of progress. When I retired from military service, we received our bishops’ approval to settle on a small homestead in coastal Maine with the mission of not only overseeing this nationwide Oblate program by phone, internet, and mail, but to also open our home as a place of monastic hospitality, life, and retreat under a contemporary adaptation of Benedictine monasticism (i.e., *The Rule of St. Benedict*). As a result, *Saint Brendan’s Monastic Retreat Community* (the physical location) and the *Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s* (the nation-wide Oblate program) were born.

of monastic stages of progress. When I retired from military service, we received our bishops’ approval to settle on a small homestead in coastal Maine with the mission of not only overseeing this nationwide Oblate program by phone, internet, and mail, but to also open our home as a place of monastic hospitality, life, and retreat under a contemporary adaptation of Benedictine monasticism (i.e., *The Rule of St. Benedict*). As a result, *Saint Brendan’s Monastic Retreat Community* (the physical location) and the *Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s* (the nation-wide Oblate program) were born.

of monastic stages of progress. When I retired from military service, we received our bishops’ approval to settle on a small homestead in coastal Maine with the mission of not only overseeing this nationwide Oblate program by phone, internet, and mail, but to also open our home as a place of monastic hospitality, life, and retreat under a contemporary adaptation of Benedictine monasticism (i.e., *The Rule of St. Benedict*). As a result, *Saint Brendan’s Monastic Retreat Community* (the physical location) and the *Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s* (the nation-wide Oblate program) were born.

(Continued on page 3)



HOW TO CONTACT US

**Father Alan L. Andraeas, Prior
Mother Susan G. Andraeas, Prioress**

**The Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s
38 Cemetary Road
Dennysville, ME 04628-4326
207-726-5129**

**saintbrendans@pwless.net
www.saintbrendans-online.org**

Saint Brendan’s mission was now two-fold: (1) to encourage and equip its “at-large” membership in the ancient disciplines of monastic spirituality in order that they might be the “incense of holiness” in their families, communities, and local churches for the sake and glory of Christ; and (2) to offer a place of private retreat, spiritual direction, deliverance, inner healing, and hands-on training in both the ‘classic’ spiritual disciplines and the practice of monastic labor according to Saint Brendan’s *Rule of Life*. To that end, our homestead – a 200-year old farm – was prepared with an office, several guest rooms, and a small chapel for praying the Daily Offices and for the regular celebration of the Eucharist.

The concept of “monastic labor” in this setting embraces the full monastic day and includes a Benedictine balance of physical labor (with one’s hands), spiritual labor (prayer, contemplation, worship), study (holy reading), recreation (wholesome renewal), and rest (silence and sleep). As the two permanent members of the community, we are obliged to practice this every day as a part of our Life Vows. It is also the expectation for those who come here for retreat – Saint Brendan’s is not a Christian ‘bed and breakfast.’ If they come, they come in order to live according to the community’s *Rule of Life* which they are then expected to take home and practice in their own lives. There is no fee for the stay, but while they are here they are expected to contribute to the monastic labor, both physical and spiritual. Of course, if they don’t work, they don’t eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Location and Ministry:

Ministry must have a context. Saint Brendan’s context is based on its location. Our location was

given to us by God. The story of finding and acquiring our property is lengthy and miraculous. The particulars, though, included that fact that: (1) we wanted to be located as far east as possible so that *Lauds* (the first prayer office of the day) is offered in intercession for the Church and the nation as the first beams of light are hitting the continental United States; accordingly, Saint Brendan’s is located 10 miles from the eastern-most tip of the nation; (2) we needed a working farm so that we could incorporate livestock – donkeys, dairy goats, chickens, turkeys, alpacas – and permaculture gardening in order to work with our hands in a return to self-sustainable “peasant skills” (including processing fiber into yarn, cheese-making, lacto-fermentation and other ‘old world’ methods of food preservation, carpentry, animal husbandry, etc.) and as an outlet for the physical labor of our retreatants; (3) the property needed to be large enough for the eventual construction of several *poustinias* (i.e., single-room hermitage retreat cabins); (4) the house needed to be large enough to accommodate 1 or 2 guest rooms, a chapel, and office space; and (5) the mortgage had to be met by my military retirement because the house and property would be ours and not that of the ministry.

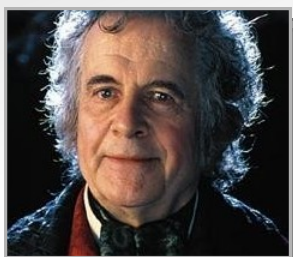
Yes, ministry takes place here (as it should in every home), but it happens on personal property. All we own is surrendered to the Lord (we are simply stewards) and Saint Brendan’s does not pay us. Ever.

God provided the perfect piece of property, but He also placed it in the middle of the poorest, most financially distressed county in the United States (it’s in Maine, not Mississippi) where over half the population of Washington County qualifies for food stamps, over 22% live below the poverty line, where



MONASTIC MUSE

muse \’myüz\ **1:** *vb* to turn something over in the mind meditatively, **2:** to think reflectively, **3:** *n* a state of deep thought...



“It is no bad thing to celebrate a simple life.”

Bilbo Baggins, “Fellowship of the Ring”
(from the “Lord of the Rings” movie trilogy)

the median age is 45, and where 25% of the working population is unemployed. As a result, a part of God's call to us was to live at a financial level commensurate with the people around us. They have very little, and for us to move in "from away" and flaunt income or resources would accomplish nothing in this area but a complete distrust of our word and witness. Similar to Paul's ministry strategies, we had to become like them in order to minister among them. Our taxable income last year was \$13,800 (the average per capita income in the county is \$14,100). And the homegrown produce, eggs, meat, and dairy that we offer for sale offsets the cost of sustaining the animals which are so integral to our ministry. God miraculously 'stretches' our resources to meet all our needs (without requesting any government aid) – and that, too, is a part of our witness to these people.



As a State of Maine religious not-for-profit corporation, Saint Brendan's "Articles of Incorporation" articulate our ministry objectives:

1. *Serve as a monastic mission in the Benedictine and Celtic Christian traditions of the larger Church of Jesus Christ as a place of retreat, worship, religious instruction, and spiritual renewal/direction;*
2. *Serve as a community of those individuals and/or families making solemn professions of religious, monastic obedience, both at Saint Brendan's or as Oblates-at-large;*
3. *Serve the surrounding local communities of Washington County as a benevolent extension of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Benedictine tradition.*

Our indigenous 'key to ministry' is the third element of our stated purpose: "Serve...as a benevolent extension of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Benedictine tradition." Not only does God provide for our immediate need, but He graciously allows the homestead to produce enough surplus food that we take care of the "orphans and widows" of the area with free milk,

cheese, eggs, meat, and produce along with the donation of our time given in service (e.g., take them to doctor's appointments, yard work, help to clean their homes, run errands such as grocery shopping and other odd jobs, etc.).

Regarding time and service, like the early monasteries, our mission is also expressed through education, whether it be accomplished through homeschooling local students [*Mother Sue is homeschooling a 7th grader this year*], or mentoring in farming techniques [*to date, three other farms/homesteads have been implemented as a result of people visiting Saint Brendan's*], or conducting weekly Bible/lectionary studies. those who have been failed by the poor quality of the local system (again, a reflection of the deep poverty of the area); we don't charge a tuition or demand a stipend for our time – God's

image in them is worth the effort. In essence, nothing we have (i.e., time, treasure, talent) is ours; it's all held with 'open hands' and is made available to the service of God. This kind of ministry, then, is modeled for those who come here on retreat as an example of true Benedictine spirituality lived out in daily circumstances.

Staffing the Ministry:

Our ministry staff requirements are determined by and based on several factors: (1) the Canon Law of the United Anglican Church, (2) the logistical aspects of this particular mission, (3) Benedictine tradition regarding this kind of mission, and (4) our own interpretation for the meaning of "successful ministry."

Saint Brendan's is technically described as a "religious community" according to Canon 21 of the UAC's Canon Law. As a religious community, it is granted permission to operate in a distinctly different way from a local parish church with its full range of outreach functions. Religious communities within the UAC are staffed and administered according to the influence of the 'religious order' upon which they are modeled or to which they belong (i.e., Benedictine, Dominican, Trappist, Franciscan, etc.), each with its own distinctive *Rule* and mission (e.g., service to the poor, education, contemplation, Christian mysticism, cloistered holiness, etc.).

(Continued on page 5)

"This kind of ministry, then, is modeled for those who come here on retreat as an example of true Benedictine spirituality lived out in daily circumstances."

(Continued from page 4)

As previously noted, Saint Brendan's is modeled on the Benedictine tradition of religious life. The *Rule of St. Benedict* is quite clear about the staffing needs of its religious communities. The community *must* have an Abbot or Prior who speaks for God in the spiritual and tangible affairs of daily life and...no one else. I am the Prior of Saint Brendan's. And while St. Benedict speaks of other 'positions' that are commonly found in larger monastic settings (e.g., the *Cellarer*, responsible for all the equipment, supplies, and food of the community; the *Gatekeeper*, the first to meet guests and pilgrims who arrive at the community; the *Reader*, designated to read aloud from Scripture or other religious works while the rest of the community eats its meal in silence; etc.), these positions are distributed by the Prior among the members of the community as the size and needs of the community require and are not considered as remunerated professional staff positions. These are the natural aspects of shared common life.

The current size of our in-residence community always stands at two (my wife and me) and no more than seven (when all guest rooms are filled). Our monastic fellowship of Friends and Oblates has not exceed 40 members. And while its membership is drawn from places as distant as New Brunswick, Canada, to Phoenix, Arizona (in fact, we just received a request for information this morning from a man in Cape Town, South Africa, who found us on the internet), their relationship is a long-distance one. Their obligations for communication only require quarterly contact for updating their progress, for prayer, and spiritual direction. Otherwise, their religious service is lived out in their local congregations. For this number of people, my role as Father Prior is more than adequate – and my wife serves under my authority (and in my name) as Mother Prioress for the women of the fellowship. There are no other staffing needs.

Likewise, Holy Trinity Chapel is the “prayer and Eucharistic expression” of our monastic life. This confuses a number of people. Where are the youth programs? The young adult programs? The religious education programs? The after-school tutoring programs? The Christian Taekwondo or Pilates classes? The cell group leadership training forums? The visual arts-in-worship performance

practices? The VBS planning meetings? The “family life center” coordination meetings? The Christian homeschool support group? The answer is simple: there aren't any.

Holy Trinity Chapel serves two purposes. It is where we offer the prayers of the Daily Office as our sacrifice of the “incense of prayer” throughout the day whether it's just my wife and me or when others drop by to join us. Holy Trinity Chapel is also where the Eucharist is celebrated. It is not a place of casual fellowship or “informal worship.” When an actual ‘church service’ is conducted, it is the full liturgy with communion; and this, ideally, is observed every day. And between those times when we pray the Daily Office or celebrate the Eucharist, the chapel can be used as a quiet place of prayer, reflection, or meditation. It has no other purpose.



Remember, Saint Brendan's attempts to conduct its daily routine as a monastery. A part of the confusion of some folks about the role of Holy Trinity Chapel is that they don't understand the technical difference between a ‘church’ and a ‘chapel.’ A church has a parochial function of not only providing a place of worship for its membership but also of collecting under one roof the many ancillary functions of congregational life such as ministry, outreach, evangelism, benevolence, education, social activity, counseling, etc. A chapel on the other hand is the setting within a defined institution (airport, hospital, college campus, Navy ship, etc.) for the observance of religious devotion without the requirement to satisfy the full range of ‘felt’ parochial needs. A chapel is not intended to take the place of a church. Holy Trinity Chapel operates as, well..., a chapel. And the Fellowship that gathers here for worship and prayer accomplishes the rest via a monastic, rather than contemporary, model.

As the Father Prior of Saint Brendan's, and as an ordained priest in the Anglican tradition, it is my duty to lead the Daily Office and to celebrate the Eucharist. Inasmuch as there are no other requirements except religious devotion, no other clergy or professional staff is necessary. My wife is a highly-skilled pianist and provides the music for our principle services of the Eucharist – in fact, I refer to her as my “Director of Sacred Music” – but this is not a staff position. We have no choir; all present for worship or

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

prayer *become* the choir. While her abilities are a tremendous blessing, her absence would not necessitate the hiring of a music minister. Music is her *gift* given in the service of the Lord without seeking remuneration.

Like most monasteries and convents, aside from retreatants (and in-residence community members), we have opened our services to people in the area. Holy Trinity Chapel has between 7-14 people at its Sunday Eucharist. They know, however, that this is a chapel and not a church. They know that we don't have, for example, a midweek "pizza and basketball" for the youth or a nursery facility to watch the children during the young mothers' weekly "Bible study and scrapbooking" fellowship gatherings. They are here for Communion, prayer, and an intensive study of the lectionary texts immediately following the service. There is nothing else because prayer and adoration are our only 'business' – and these things, internalized and fleshed out through the practice of ancient spiritual disciplines, are what we strive for in the life-long perfection of an *interior faith*. The rest of our "ministry programs" are merely the fruit of monastic life lived out in the community around us.

Shape of Things to Come:

Saint Brendan's is small. It's intended to stay small. What we do can only be done on a very intimate, personal, one-on-one level – faith expressed in unity; unity lived out in community. While many churches operate a plethora of programs to spiritually feed, encourage, engage, and multiply their congregations as a measure of success, Saint Brendan's, by design, does just the opposite. The Holy Spirit directs people here who are called to this unique life of lay monasticism. It is quiet, humble, and behind-the-scenes. It's not a catchy, glamorous, or self-promoting ministry. It's not burdened with constantly seeking to implement the latest growth program or technique; it's not captive to the "tyranny of novelty" in order to encourage growth or financial surplus. There are no staff issues because there is no staff. There are no salary issues because we have chosen not to receive remuneration of any kind (offerings received through Holy Trinity Chapel are distributed two ways: 50% to missionaries we support, 50% to the

chapel building fund). While our Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws make it possible for Saint Brendan's to contribute to health insurance, stipends, building management funds, etc., we have chosen not to exercise those provisions.

My military retirement (and my wife teaches music for several hours a week at a small school – 10 children from Kindergarten through 8th grade) is more than adequate. And the cost of raising the livestock is offset by the sale of eggs, milk, cheese, and produce to those who have the means to pay for it; the animals and garden must be self-supporting.

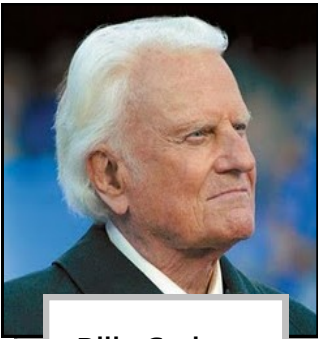
In the near future we hope to build a free-standing chapel on the property rather than using a room in our house, but it will continue to be a chapel with a maximum seating capacity for 20 communicants, no larger than a 30' x 40' building without electricity or other utilities. It will be built by the community. It will be rustic, constructed with rough-cut lumber from a local lumber mill. It will have a woodstove for heat and oil lamp sconces for light. It will not need a sound system or an overhead projection system (these things may indicate technical necessity for the size of a church but they are not 'success indicators' of deep spiritual growth and maturity within the congregation). And like its current location, the new Holy Trinity Chapel will be consecrated for the purpose of praying the Daily Office and celebrating the Eucharist.

If the permanent "in-residence" community should increase in numbers, we pray that it will begin with another family who chooses to live "in community" with us. (The other option would be for a short term group that comes for a summer internship in "apostolic farming" along with an educational component in monastic spirituality.) This will not entail additional staff, but it will greatly aid in the daily work. Once another family is here, we would be open to having single people come, men in particular, to help with the manual labor of the farm. Although they would be given the opportunity to build a small monastic compound on the property they would still be expected to eat meals in community with the larger group. Again, this does not necessitate the requirement of additional paid staff; if they take religious vows, they will serve here under the classic monastic charge of obedience, poverty, and chastity. Married members on the property (and our Oblates at-large) take the original Benedictine vows of obedi-



ence, stability, and fidelity (to which we have added the fourth element of 'joy'). If we have a group of men, and if their number warrants the need, the most spiritually mature among them may be installed as the Dean or sub-Prior at their compound, a position of spiritual authority and not that of paid staff.

In the end, we look upon Saint Brendan's as a unique work of the Lord, hard to "pigeon-hole" into



Billy Graham

any single model of church management or growth. In fact, we're probably closer to what Billy Graham envisioned in his classic text, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Following a lifetime of revival successes that filled football stadiums, he was asked if he would do anything differently if given the chance. He replied:

I think one of the first things I would do would be to get a small group of eight or ten or twelve people around me that would meet a few hours a week and pay the price! It would cost them something in time and effort. I would share with them everything I had, over a period of years.

That's what God is calling us to do with Saint Brendan's: a labor expected to carry across the years in the discipleship of a small group of people intent on practicing the ancient disciplines of monastic spirituality in the context of unity, community, prayer, and Eucharist. ✕

POSTSCRIPT: My grade came back. 200 points out of a possible 250. That means I (actually, you and me) earned a C+. The professor said that while my report answered many of his questions, it raised a lot more. I have two more major reports to write for this class plus several book reviews. Maybe he will come to see that a small, monastic "house church" ministry is as viable and pleasing to God as any mega-church. In any event, I'll take a C+ because you're worth it!

IT'S ON AMAZON...

Some folks have asked if they could somehow get a copy of my dissertation (reported in the last newsletter). It has been posted on Amazon.com as an e-book for Kindle or Kindle-enabled platforms (iPhone, Windows PC, Mac, Blackberry, iPad, Android, and Windows Phone 7) with free application downloads from Amazon. The formatting is a bit off, especially with the appendices, but the text is all there. If you should download it, please let me know what you think. To find it, go to Amazon.com and type: "One Glad River". It's the only title by that name.



WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Please welcome (and pray for) our newest "Friends" to the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's:

Joyce Barr (Maine)

William Landmesser (Maine)

Anthony Cieri (Massachusetts)

Laura Pocius (Illinois)

Mary Greene (Maine)

The Navigator

Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
38 Cemetery Road
Dennysville, ME 04628

