

REPORT OF THE UNDERMOUNT REGIONAL COUNCIL

Undermount Region consists of ten very disparate parishes. Stretching from the agriculturally rich lands of Winona through the suburban sprawl of Stoney Creek, sweeping through the downtown Hamilton and some of its poorest areas, the Undermount Region touches the considerably comfortable residential areas tucked beneath the escarpment and then concludes in the residentially prestigious part of Westdale. The parishes comprising Undermount Region are as varied as the demographics they represent. Its downtown Hamilton ministries as well as its community-based parishes include a wide spectrum of people very much like those throughout the rest of the diocese.

As one of the two functioning Regional Councils in the Diocese of Niagara, Undermount Region is an example of how and what a Regional Council can accomplish. At each meeting, the Regional Archdeacon, the Regional Dean, and the Synod Council reps summarize what is happening at Synod Council and the Diocese. Often what seems to be a 'dull' item of business at a Synod Council meeting contains an issue that turns out to have a specific impact upon one or more of the Regional Council parishes. As a result, it is the solidarity of such a group with both lay and clergy representatives, that the Undermount Regional Council has been a powerful tool for action, understanding and growth for all concerned. Consider the recent Greening Niagara initiative now copied across the nation.

Now there is a new challenge for Undermount Region. Suffering from an aging population that used to sustain the vitality of its parishes, and challenged by a growing pattern of people moving to the outer-lying areas of Hamilton-Wentworth, Undermount Region is facing considerable concerns. A declining population in the parishes and an increasing need for revenue are forcing Undermount parishes with their generally aging population to acknowledge that they can no longer sustain the kind of ministries that defined their former 'glory-days'. The face of Ministry is changing.

Should the parishes fade away, defeated, or can they spark to new life in new and different ways? Will the 'petals' of the Diocesan Vision help Undermount to revive?

For a long time now, there have been many discussions at Synod about the challenges that our parishes face. Very recently, the Bishop has responded with a unique option. On October 24 and 25, 2011, Undermount Region had an 'old-fashioned' MISSION, a two-evening event spearheaded by our Bishop Michael. Followed up by a month of Bible studies through the month of November, the Undermount Region is studying the Ministry of Hospitality. This Mission is an intentional study of how parishes in Undermount can make Christ real to the people who live in their midst. It needs to wrestle with the question, "How can the Church stay true to its call while reaching out to a vastly changing world around it?"

This is a huge question which the earliest evangelists struggled to answer. It's a question we all probably need to wrestle with. Did the early Christians feel defeated once Christ had left them or did they feel sparked to new life? That is the challenge which Undermount Region faces at the time of this Diocesan Synod.

Time will tell. Watch for further developments in Undermount Region.

Respectfully submitted
Susan A. Little, Chair