

REPORT OF THE MISSION STRATEGY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

In today's environment, the work of the Mission Strategy Committee has become of vital importance to the life of the diocese of Niagara. The mission of this group in this past year has been one of creating strategic plans for regional ministry development, providing support to parishes in mission initiatives, making recommendations to synod council and the Bishop and supporting the development and deployment of the Diocesan Vision of 'Pursuing Excellence in Ministry'.

Regional Planning - Mission Strategy has spent considerable time examining the need to explore different ministry models given the challenges we all face with declining resources, aging buildings and higher costs for maintenance. In the Welland area, there has been a discussion ongoing regarding how the five parishes might create a regional ministry plan where they might share clergy support and pastoral care, administrative help and where there is a shared understanding of a common ministry plan for the area. We have discussed at length how, moving forward, as Anglican communities it will be more and more important to broaden the way we think about ministry and be less parochial and protective of our individual congregations. In Halton Hills, the Georgetown/Milton parishes have also engaged in a collective conversation about their future together lovingly referring to their mission plan as STEAM (Serving Together Expanding and Enhancing Anglican Ministry). Bishop Michael Bird appointed the Reverend Canon Dr. Margaret Murray as the missioner for Halton Hills charged with the responsibility of creating a new way forward for these parishes together.

Members of Mission Strategy have also been invited into parishes as consultants to help them create their own strategic plans. St. Aidan's Oakville, under the very capable leadership of the Reverend Cheryl Fricker has been engaged for a number of years now of re-visioning what and who they are called to be in that part of the Oakville community. Their Lindisfarne project has engaged the entire community in determining how St. Aidan's could best reach out to meet the needs of the local neighbourhood. They have developed local partnerships, begun addressing building limitations and how they can re-tool to meet the needs and changed the way they think about being the Church in that place.

Mission Initiatives - This past year saw introduced into the diocese an initiative that comes out of the Church of England referred to as Fresh Expressions. A member of the committee, Andy Kalbfleisch and his wife Sue, have been to England on a couple of occasions studying and learning about this new expression of Christian Church. This experience has translated into Niagara and a number of parishes are exploring ways to offer Fresh Expression of Church for instance the Damascus Fair Trade Cafe in Dunnville or the Hub Pub in Port Colborne. The Kalbfleisch's organized a very well attended Fresh Expressions day in our diocese this past May and if you would like further information go to: www.niagara.anglican.ca/Fresh_Expressions/index.cfm.

Diocesan Vision - Mission Strategy has been very involved in the development and communication of the evolving diocesan vision, Pursuing Excellence in Ministry. The Bishop has spent this fall travelling around the diocese articulating what this vision might look like and mean for parishes across the diocese. This vision will only be realized and effective as parishes understand, embrace and engage in this way forward. We believe that as a Church we are being called to something new so if you want to learn more and engage in knowing how this can be implemented in your parish, please contact the synod office.

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Mission Covenant - Mission Strategy has been looking at the whole experience of transitions in the life of a parish when a new rector is being sought. What is the purpose of the interim period? What is expected of the interim priest through this process? Do parochial committees have the skill set and knowledge to effectively manage this process? Within the diocese there exist a number of programs that all feed into a process of transition, and we have worked at determining how each relates to the other. What is the relationship between Niagara Continuing Education, Fresh Start, the Companions Program and how they effectively prepare parishes and clergy alike for transition? Parishes must clearly understand and articulate their mission and purpose and have that reflected in their parish profiles. Often this is not the case. Mission Strategy wants to have consultants offer expertise and resources to parishes in providing an accurate and realistic picture of their present reality and what the future might hold.

In the same capacity, the Bishop seeks to create a process whereby the parish, new clergy and Bishop himself clearly articulate and understand what is expected of each of the parties in making the parishes' hopes and vision a reality. It is hoped that moving forward, a covenant can be crafted between these parties that makes clear what role each of the parish, Bishop and clergy play in realizing their shared plan for the future.

Re-development Projects - Presently there are two major re-development projects being pursued in our diocese. In Hamilton, All Saints' Church has partnered with an organization called Options for Homes to create an eight story geared to income affordable housing condominium. The present church is beyond repair and will be brought down to make way for this new project. However, the All Saints' parish will move to the first floor of this building with worship space, a storefront ministry and the opportunity to continue their ministry without the paralyzing costs of maintaining a very old building. We want to thank the people of All Saints' for their foresight, courage and commitment in moving forward with this very exciting plan that will guarantee ministry in that area for a long time to come.

The second is at St. Luke's Church in Oakville. This parish is partnering with a retirement residence company to build a retirement home on diocesan property that will also tie in with the ministry plan of the parish. At the same time, this joint venture will provide the opportunity for the parish to re-build their parish centre that will become a hub of activity for the north Oakville area. This is a discussion that has been ongoing for many years so to have this dream almost realized is very exciting in the life of St. Luke's and the diocese. To you members of St. Luke's parish, we also thank you for your courage, perseverance and vision. We pray for all of you.

We wish to thank all members of Mission Strategy as listed below for your hard work and commitment over this past year and we look forward to an exciting and busy 2010.

The Reverend Owen Ash
Bishop Michael Bird
Mr. Bill Connor
The Reverend Dianne Distler
Ms. Karen Farrar
The Reverend Marc Germaine
The Reverend Canon Robin Graves
The Venerable Dr. Steve Hopkins
The Reverend Susan Wells

Mr. Andy Kalbfleisch
The Venerable Dr. Rick Jones, Chair
Mr. Bob McKinnell
The Reverend Canon Dr. Margaret Murray
The Reverend Canon Marni Nancekivell
The Venerable Michael Patterson
The Reverend John Ripley
Ms. Jane Wyse, Scribe

Respectfully submitted,
Archdeacon Michael Patterson