

NIAGARA CONTINUING EDUCATION

Newly ordained clergy in our diocese are expected to participate in the first two years of their ministry (with a 3rd year optional) with a programme known as Niagara Continuing Education. We meet three times per year in an overnight session held at Canterbury Hills. Participant driven in terms of our themes, our sessions have alternated between professional skills development and the health and wellness of clergy as leaders.

In February of 2008, Bishop Michael Bird who presented an early version of his vision “Pursuing Excellence in Ministry”. It was also a time for both Marion and I to get on board with our participants and solicit their input into our upcoming programme.

In May of 2008 our overnight session focused on “Sustaining Spirituality for Ministry” with Canon Audrey Conard as a resource person. As a spiritual director to many clergy, Audrey had some important insights for our participants.

In October of 2008 we had a visit from the Venerable Rick Jones who ran a session on the “Do’s and Don’ts of Running a Vestry Meeting.” As an experience clergy, Rick was an excellent resource to newly ordained clergy preparing for their first Vestry meetings as Rectors. We also had an excellent session with the Reverend Sue Steiner from Conrad Grebel College. Sue’s focus was on “Managing Conflict in Faith Communities.” She is a consultant in this area and brought good practical knowledge and a grounded theological overview of the issues involved as well.

In February of 2009, Dr Wanda Malcolm from Wycliffe College led a very informative session on “Clergy Wellness.” As a therapist in private practice, Wanda brought both her professional background and her own deep faith experience to our discussion of this important area. Wanda was also involved in a large research project in the diocese of Toronto on clergy mental health and had plenty of insights to share from her involvement in this study.

In May of 2009 our theme was “Navigating Change in Congregations - A Lay Perspective.” We were fortunate to have the assistance of Rob Reid and Bob Morrow with background help from Fred Hall. Each of these men has extensive experience as volunteer consultants in the diocese and had many important things to share from their perspective as lay persons involved in parish life.

In October of 2009 we had a visit from the Reverend Dr Paul Wilson, professor of homiletics at Emmanuel College. In response to participant input, Paul explored the theme “Sustaining Energy in Our Preaching - *Especially When We’ve Been Through The Lectionary Several Times.*”

Each session also includes a fairly lengthy check-in. This is an opportunity for clergy to reflect upon both their personal and professional lives in a supportive and safe atmosphere. Worship and community building are also important components to NCE.

We appreciate the support which the diocese offers in this area of our common ministry. While both the Venerable Marion Vincett (*retired*) and I are volunteers, the accommodation, meals and resource costs are sponsored through the diocesan budget. It’s a worthwhile investment in the ongoing formation and support of our parish clergy in the first two years of their ordained ministry.

Marion and I have shared in the co-facilitation since the February of 2008 and have enjoyed the ministry we’ve shared with our newly ordained colleagues.

Respectfully submitted,
The Reverend Canon Joseph Asselin
NCE Co-facilitator