

REPORT OF THE BISHOP'S TASK FORCE FOR A SAFE CHURCH

PRIMARY FOCUS:

As a Christian community of faith, the Anglican Diocese of Niagara is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which members, staff, volunteers and guests can work and worship together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation.

This group continues to develop our knowledge in offering “best practice resources” within the Diocese of Niagara. Those who serve on this team work at providing basic education to lay people and clergy in the prevention of misconduct. Some of our team members are especially trained in the investigation of circumstances where misconduct is alleged to have taken place

ACTIVITIES:

Those who serve on this team work at providing basic education to lay people and clergy in the prevention of misconduct, and help individuals and communities to reflect on what it is to be a “Safe Church”. Safe Church issues range from issues of individual misconduct, the maintenance of healthy interpersonal boundaries to the planning of physical plants to maintain transparency and a safe environment in which community can function.

Our primary activity continues to be the provision of basic orientation the policy *Sexual Misconduct Policy: Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Assault 2000* which currently governs clergy and lay workers licensed for professional ministry within the Diocese. Our training extends far beyond acquainting people with the policy *per se* and extends beyond “the letter of the law” to help individuals identify circumstances, behaviors and practices which create the potential for unwholesome interactions to occur.

We exist as well, to respond to, (and at the Bishop’s invitation, investigate) situations where there is a concern that misconduct may have taken place and where individuals have felt that because of something specific, that the church is not a “safe place” for them. Team members are especially trained in responding to situations where misconduct is alleged to have taken place.

Members of the committee are also available for parishes, deanery groups and Clericus group both to educate people around the nature of harassment, abuse and the misuse of power. In such settings, we assist people in understanding the policy as it currently exists. The creation of a “safer church” is of concern in denominations throughout the world. Many resources from throughout the Anglican Communion and from other denominations are being employed as at the current time, we are in the midst of re-writing our Safe Church Policy. The new policy will reflect not on issues of professional misconduct alone, but also on issues such as bullying and the misuse of power which occurs from time to time within the Christian community.

It should be noticed that increasingly there is a connection between the work of this task force and the efforts of the Volunteer Screening and Development Group, under the experienced guidance of Joyce Wilton, as we work together to insure a safer, healthier church environment.

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MEMBERSHIP:

This committee includes clergy, pastoral specialists, lawyers and others who have a concern for a Safe and Healthy church.

This year we acknowledge with thanks the extensive work of other individuals, Canon Robert Welch, Diocesan Chancellor, Archdeacon Lynne Corfield, the Reverend Canon Robin Graves, Mr. David Ricketts and Mrs. Alison D'Atri who have given generously of their time in special projects of the Safe Church Task Force.

Members:

The Right Reverend Michael Bird
Mr. Graeme Leach
The Reverend Rod McDowell, Deacon
The Reverend Canon Marni Nancekivell (Chair)
The Venerable Jim Sandilands
Ms Joyce Wilton

Respectfully submitted,
Canon Marni Nancekivell, Chair