

REPORTS OF VISION GROUPS AND VISION-RELATED GROUPS

Our Vision for Ministry in the Diocese of Niagara is depicted with the stylized graphic of a flower. Not unlike the turning of a plant towards the sun, the pistil of that flower points us to our core vocation “Following Christ passionately, we pursue excellence, practise justice and grow”. The flower is grounded in the soil of vision values: spiritual discipline, valuing diversity, honesty & integrity, and passion & hard work. When we take up that core vocation and are grounded in those values, we bear fruit, or flower, as people who are prophetic and generous, communally gathered in life-changing worship and in which we raise up and equip innovative (lay and clergy) leaders for ministry.

It is clear, as we continue to live this vision out, however, that we are not tending just one flower, but many gardens in which God’s mission grows and flourishes. The gardens of our: individual lives and households; parishes, villages, towns and cities; wider church and community partnerships; all are places where God can be found seeking and making for justice, peace and healing and gracing us with faith, hope, joy and love.

Let us pick up the lenses of our Vision for Ministry and gratefully gaze at these gardens, noticing where growth is flourishing already, where it has yet to take root, and where tilling, sowing, fertilizing, pruning and harvesting may each be needed. In the Reports to Synod from Vision and Vision-related Groups which follow, we can see how so many gardeners have laboured this “season” in the fields of our diocese seeking to nurture our growth as disciples and disciple-making communities and striving to come alongside the God of mission who gives the growth.

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Continuous Culture of Innovation

Besides regular meetings, the Innovation Group focused their energies on two main events in 2013: The Vital Church Planting Conference, and the ReChurch Conference.

Vital Church Planting:

The Innovation Group organized and subsidized the registrations for 15 clergy and laypeople to attend the VCP conference from January 31st to February 2nd, 2013. The conference was held at St. Paul's Anglican Church, Bloor Street, Toronto. This year the theme of the conference was ‘Dying to Live: Disciple Making and New Christian Communities’, and the featured speaker was Bishop Graham Cray. Bishop Cray is one of the founders of Fresh Expressions. In 2009 Bishop Cray was appointed Missioner and Leader of Fresh Expressions in the UK by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Since then the movement has expanded to include Australia, New Zealand and the US, and crosses a number of denominational boundaries.

ReChurch 2013

The Innovation Group in partnership with the Wycliffe College's Institute of Evangelism have spent much time planning the very first "ReChurch" conference, this year held at St. Thomas' in

St. Catharines. The planning team has invited two speakers to teach on the topic of "Rethinking Discipleship." Our first speaker, Harold Percy, is a dynamic congregational leader with over 34 years' experience in growing congregations and nurturing passionate Christians, most recently at Trinity Church, Streetsville, which he built into one of the largest and most active congregations in the Anglican Church of Canada. Harold has helped many churches in areas such as congregational development, getting focused in ministry, making disciples, financial stewardship, developing passionate spirituality, evangelism and congregational leadership. Harold's topic, "Why Discipleship?" challenges us to reclaim the centrality of disciple-making in the life of the church. Our second speaker, Mark Leach, is the current Rector of Trinity Church, Streetsville, a role in which he functions as the lead visionary, teaching pastor and organisational architect. Mark will focus on "Going Deeper with Small Groups", explaining how at Trinity discipleship is primarily accomplished through "sermon-based small groups." Mark will share with us the joys and struggles and benefits of small group ministry as a primary way of moving a congregation more deeply into a relationship with Christ.

Continuous Culture of Innovation Vision Group Members:

The Rev. Canon Robert Hurkmans (chair)
Mr. Andy Kalbfleisch
Prof. John Bowen
The Rev. Sheila Van Zandwyk
The Rev. Canon Kevin Bothwell
Mr. Andrew Clinkard

Submitted by the Rev. Canon Rob Hurkmans

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Generous Culture of Stewardship

With support from John Robertson (Anglican Church of Canada) and our own Stewardship Consultant, The Venerable Lynne Marchant, our Vision Team has been working on ways to support a shift in the culture of our Diocese. For most Anglicans, Stewardship equates to operating budgets, capital campaigns, and awkward talk about money. New voices are emerging that are helping us to see that the decisions we make about our money contribute to our spiritual health. We are learning to make connections between stewardship and mission. We are experimenting with language that flows from the realization that grateful hearts overflow with generosity.

We are pleased that we are publishing a Generosity Tool Kit that will provide resources to parish leaders who wish to support a similar culture shift in their home congregations. The new tool kit is coming to a browser near you. Also, in the fall of 2013, we have distributed copies of Douglas Hambidge's book, *The S Word* to stewardship committees and parish corporations. *The*

S Word promises to be another excellent resource for promoting a culture of generosity in our congregations.

In partnership with the National Church and Hands Across Niagara, the Stewardship Vision Team had the opportunity to work behind the scenes on a series of three donor appreciation evenings. Our plan is to share our insights with parishes so that we can all get better at thanking our members who support God's work in our region. Donor appreciation is one more opportunity to draw the connections between hospitality, mission, and generosity.

Generous Culture of Stewardship Vision Group Members:

The Rev. Dr. Derek Anderson (chair)
The Rev. Canon Jean Archbell
The Ven. Lynne Marchant (staff)
Mr. David Moriarity
The Rev. Deanne Patchett
The Ven. David Pickett
Ms. Ella Turnbull

Submitted by the Rev. Dr. Derek Anderson

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Journeys in Faith

With a significant increase in participation, more than two hundred people participated in this year's Bishop's Lenten Book Study. People across the diocese read Mary Jo Leddy's *The Other Face of God*, reflecting on how to learn from the other and about the nature of immigration issues in Canada. The bishop was pleased to welcome Ms. Leddy for an author talk and Q&A in March, which was attended by more than a hundred people from across the diocese.

Our new **Glimpses of God** initiative was held on three nights in the late spring, with simultaneous programs in three areas of the diocese. Presenters offered engaging looks at how they had personally come to see God in their daily lives through such diverse topics as depression, pilgrimages, the natural world, music, and many more.

We have begun looking at providing more resources in electronic formats for those unable to attend some programs, and hope to provide these in the new year.

Journeys in Faith Group Members:

The Rev. Jack Cox
The Rev. Michael Deed
The Rev. Matthew Griffin (Convenor)

Sr. Margaret, CSC
Sr. Michael, CSC
The Rev. Aaron Orear
Ms. Christyn Perkons
The Rev. Patricia Stansfield

Submitted by the Rev. Matthew Griffin

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Life Changing Worship

At the Bishop's request, Life Changing Worship took a pause this year to allow for some other work to proceed. The Bishop convened a Bishop's Conversation on Liturgy which involved a variety of clergy and laity from across a broad theological spectrum meeting regularly to discuss the role and practice of liturgy in Niagara. These day-long conversations were challenging and fruitful, and then they themselves paused while other work proceeded.

The Bishop has relished his participation in indaba conversations with Bishops from other parts of the Anglican Communion. He has returned from each meeting deepened in his understanding and respect for other perspectives, and also feeling profoundly heard and understood in the expression of his own perspective. He has spoken of the deep bonds of affection that have developed among indaba participants, and of a sense that people's commonalities are deeper than their differences.

In the hope that a similar experience might be created here in Niagara in dialogue around liturgy, the Bishop invited 40 clergy and licensed lay workers to participate in a pilot indaba conversation.

Indaba is a Zulu word for a gathering for purposeful discussion. An Indaba first and foremost acknowledges that there are issues that need to be addressed effectively to foster on-going communal living. People meet and converse, ensuring that everybody has a voice, and contributes (in our case, praying that it might be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit). The purpose of the discussion is to find out the deeper convergences that might hold people together in difference and come to a deeper understanding of the topic or issue discussed.

*These reflections on Indaba were initiated by
The Most Rev. Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town.*

The group of forty met on May 16 to hear directly from the Bishop about his own indaba experiences and his hopes for the Niagara indaba pilot. Facilitated by The Rev. Amy Cousineau, the group set norms, participated in community building activities and then met their indaba group for the first time. Over four meetings between May and the end of October, the group was asked to focus on these questions;

Meeting 1: What does it mean to you to be a disciple?

Meeting 2: What does it mean to our worshipping life together to be an Anglican?
Meeting 3: How are we formed by liturgy to proclaim Christ passionately?
Meeting 4: In these times of liturgical change reflected in a proliferation of alternative, contextual liturgies, how might we worship in a way that reflects our unity without demanding uniformity?

The groups were asked to report to the Bishop after each meeting with a statement of what they could agree on, and the Bishop will reflect on these as the Bishop's Conversation on Liturgy resumes post-indaba.

In the meantime, the Life Changing Worship group has been encouraging parishes to write articles for the Niagara Anglican about their transformative worship experiences; has promoted and funded participation in liturgy workshops in Toronto and at Renison College, and has encouraged the use of the liturgy materials in the diocesan resource library.

Plans for 2014 include two local liturgy workshops and sponsorship of a diocesan Artist-in-Residence in partnership with Journeys in Faith.

Life-Changing Worship Vision Group Members:

Ms. Stephanie DeForest Furtado
The Rev. Matthew Griffin
Ms. Janet Hope
Ms. Christyn Perkons (Chair)
The Rev. Patricia Stansfield
The Very Rev. Peter Wall

Submitted by Ms. Christyn Perkons

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Outstanding Leadership for Ministry

This year has been a time of transition for our team. Thanks to the Rev. Tom Vaughan, Andy Kalbfleisch, the Rev. Dr. Nigel Bunce, and Bill Connor for their past work with this committee.

In the past year we have spent time reviewing a 'List of Competencies for Ordination' for the national church; studied John Maxwell's book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*; considered (and recommended supporting) a 'Diocesan Bishop's Scholar' position for the D.Min. program (to be funded largely by Trinity College with some diocesan contributions).

Our vision team is working at furthering 'outstanding leadership' in our diocese through:

- supporting current leadership initiatives, including: the Fresh Start program, Clergy and Licensed Lay Worker Days, the annual Clergy and Licensed Lay Worker Conference, the Niagara Continuing Education program, interest-driven learning communities, Ministry Covenants
- sponsoring a Leadership Conference in 2014 for lay leaders and clergy
- Liaising with the new Human Resources for Ministry Committee

Outstanding Leadership for Ministry Vision Group Members:

Mr. Stan Bowers

The Rev. Canon Dr. Cathie Crawford-Browning (chair)

The Rev. Canon Terry DeForest (staff)

The Rev. Dr. Renée Desjardins

The Ven. Dr. Stephen Hopkins

Ms. Cathy McCann

Submitted by the Rev. Canon Dr. Cathie Crawford-Browning

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Prophetic Social Justice Making

Goal: The Diocese of Niagara engages with those seeking justice, striving to faithfully uphold the dignity of all, and with God's help to transform lives.

Highlights for 2012/2013, include:

- Realigning the work of the Niagara Social Justice Committee with this vision group in order to streamline our administrative tasks and enhance our ability to engage in justice issues and initiatives.
- Being a sounding board for the work of the Rev. Bill Mous, Director of Justice, Community & Global Ministries (in his animating, communication, advocacy and facilitation roles) and for several diocesan committees and working groups.
- Working to raise awareness about Synod's Living Wage motion and its call for all parish corporations to ensure their employees are paid a minimum of \$12.50/hr by 2014.
- Supporting many social justice initiatives, including:
 - Raising awareness of the White Ribbon campaign and the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
 - A Fast in Solidarity with Chief Teresa Spence and KAIROS' Our Waters Our Life campaign to call attention to indigenous justice issues.
 - Advocacy for the creation of a National Housing Strategy (Bill C-400)
 - A provincial forum with Poverty Free Ontario to discern next steps with regards to poverty eradication efforts
 - Youth Synod in Action, which brought youth to learn and engage in a variety of justice issues within our diocese.
 - The Proud to Protect Refugees campaign that challenges the stigma associated with being resettled as a refugee in Canada.

- A National Day of Action to protest the cuts made to the interim Federal Health program for refugees.
- A tri-diocesan initiative to engage MPPs and urge bold action as part of the renewal of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy.
- Coordinating the recent JUSTconnect day of learning and networking which brought together leaders from across the diocese to explore theology, community engagement and the issues of our day to equip for justice-making.

To stay abreast of all the latest social justice happenings, sign up for JUSTnews, a monthly electronic newsletter published by the diocese. You can sign up here: <http://eepurl.com/n5RzL>

Prophetic Social Justice-Making Vision Group Members:

Ms. Alicia Archbell
 Mr. Roy Campbell
 Ms. Judy Connor
 The Rev. Canon Dr. Sharyn Hall
 The Rev. Terry Holub
 The Rev. Elizabeth Huether
 Ms. Cathy Hughes
 Mr. Dennis Hurst
 The Rev. Rod McDowell
 The Rev. Bill Mous (staff)
 Ms. Sue Pratt
 Ms. Carolyn Vanderlip (chair)
 Ms. Ellen Woolaver

Submitted by the Rev. Bill Mous & Ms. Carolyn Vanderlip

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Vision Values

The Vision Values Group gathered a few times during this past year under the leadership and guidance of Canon Margaret Murray whom we are sorry to report has resigned from this role. We wish Margaret well and appreciate all the work she did to move this vital part of the Diocesan Vision forward.

In May of 2012 the group gathered with Canon Terry DeForest to discuss the directions and themes which have emerged as we pay particular attention to the Core Vision statement and the foundational Values in that Vision, and to receive some direction in shaping some goals and indicators and outcomes for the work as the Vision Values group. Subsequently, the Vision Values group has been working at and discussing creative ways to help us all within the Diocese incorporate the Vision Values of: **honesty and integrity; passion and hard work; while valuing diversity, and spiritual discipline** in the work and ministry of all aspects of Diocesan life.

We spent a significant amount of time in our meetings discussing what the values might mean and what are our goals in helping others implement these values into the variety of activities that are part of our life and ministry within the Diocesan family, might be. Specific plans are still in the making and we look forward to continuing to work as part of the Vision team in enabling the Vision to be lived.

The choice of the Diocese to focus this past year on the Core Value of our vision “following Christ passionately we pursue excellence, practise justice and grow” was a cause of joy for the group and provoked good, healthy discussion about just what it means for us to follow Christ passionately and how might we aid in encouraging people to do so... as a result some seasonal study / reflections were created for Advent in past years.

Vision Values Group Members:

Ms. Cindy Blades

Ms. Shirley Broostad

Mr. Michael Edwards

The Rev. Pamela Guyatt

The Rev. Canon Dr. Sharyn Hall

The Rev. Elizabeth Huether

The Rev. Canon Dr. Margaret Murray (chair- until September 2013)

Submitted by the Rev. Elizabeth Huether

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Vision Groups Leaders Group

On at least five occasions since Synod 2012, the convenors, chairs and staff of the Vision Groups and Journeys in Faith (a vision-related group) gathered to reflect on the ways and degree to which we as a diocese are engaging our Vision for Ministry. Together, in regular consultation with Bishop Michael, we have sought to help make the work of parishes, Vision Groups, Synod Council and Synod more and more “vision-shaped.” We have seen much progress (in the meeting agendas of Synod Council and Synod, in the diocesan budget process and budget proposal, in the numerous events, resources and programmes initiated or co-sponsored by Vision and Vision-related Groups, in workshops and new models of ministry being pursued in and between parishes, *et cetera*) even as we find ourselves impatient to take even bolder and better resourced and coordinated steps into a vision-shaped, missional future.

As one might naturally expect with “gardens” and other living and evolving organisms, this has been a year of considerable transition for Vision Groups with substantial changes in the leadership (and membership) of several Vision Groups (Generous Culture of Stewardship, Outstanding Leadership for Ministry, Prophetic Social Justice Making and Vision Values). There

have been a number of parallel changes in the focus of various Vision Groups. Many thanks to the Rev. Canon Dr. Margaret Murray, the Venerable David Pickett, the Rev. Tom Vaughan, Judy Worsley who have each retired from identified convenor/chair roles with Vision Groups. As their successors, we welcomed the Rev. Dr. Derek Anderson and the Rev. Canon Dr. Cathie Crawford-Browning, who have taken up leadership of Vision Groups this year and to the Rev. Matthew Griffin, the convenor of the Journeys in Faith Group, invited to bring that group's work to the wider diocesan table where other Vision Groups sought to coordinate and strengthen their ministries. Words of appreciation are also due to those who have exercised continuing responsibilities as Chairs/Convenors or staff-persons for Vision Groups, including the Rev. Canon Rob Hurkmans, the Ven. Lynne Marchant, the Rev. Bill Mous, Christyn Perkons and Carolyn Vanderlip.

This year of transition has also been evident at the Synod Office. The return to parish ministry (as of October 1, 2013) of our Executive Officer, (then) Archdeacon Michael Patterson, and the subsequent decision by Bishop Michael not to fill the resulting vacancy has resulted in a reorganization of roles, responsibilities and titles amongst several diocesan staff. Many of the details of those changes are outlined in the November Niagara Anglican and on the diocesan website. But here, as in so many other areas, the reflections which have taken place have constantly referred to how best to engage our diocesan vision.

Vision Groups Leaders Group members

The Rev. Dr. Derek Anderson (starting November 2012)
The Rev. Canon Dr. Cathie Crawford-Browning (starting July 2013)
The Rev. Canon Terry DeForest (Convenor)
The Rev. Matthew Griffin
The Rev. Canon Rob Hurkmans
The Ven. Lynne Marchant
The Rev. Bill Mous
The Rev. Canon Dr. Margaret Murray (until September 2013)
Ms. Christyn Perkons
The Ven. David Pickett (until November 2012)
Ms. Carolyn Vanderlip
The Rev. Tom Vaughan (until February 2013)
Ms. Judy Worsley (until September 2013)

Submitted by the Rev. Canon Terry DeForest