

MISSION ACTION PLAN REPORT

Vision: **Called to Life – Compelled to Love**

Mission Statement: **Ignited by the irresistible love of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, we partner with God to deepen faith, share stories and care for God's world.**

Our kingdom work has continued to thrive despite the impacts of the lingering pandemic. While COVID-19 has wreaked havoc in our midst, we have coped with isolation, loneliness, emotional fatigue, grief, endless change and the roller coaster of diminishing and increasing infection rates...and we have coped through prayer, grace, compassion, and the support of our communities. Looking through the lens of our Mission Action Plan (MAP) reminds us that, as partners with God in the bringing about of the kingdom, we have done well with our priorities.

Create and Implement Opportunities to Ignite and Strengthen Faith

- Revive groups continue at parishes with support from the Revive Coordinator, Canon Leslie Gerlofs who not only offered a weekly online group for new Revive leaders but also facilitated a weekly online peer support group called A Place to Dwell through which clergy could check in with one another, pray and rest in God's presence. A compact Revive for Lent program was used impactfully by several parishes this year. Contact Leslie if you want to share the Revive experience at your parish or if you'd be interested in an online diocesan group (revive@niagaraanglican.ca).
- A group of clergy and laity, facilitated by the Rev. Tom Vaughan and with the encouragement of the bishop, have responded to an interest in Alpha. They are beginning to run Alpha courses in regions across the diocese. Contact Tom if you are looking for a course (revtvaughan37@yahoo.ca).
- The Bishop offered two Books for Lent this year, The Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting and The Way of St. Benedict both of which resonated with folks across the diocese who read the book on their own or as part of parish groups. Given all the waiting we have been forced to do over the past nineteen months, finding the gifts in waiting and in Benedict's spiritual practices seemed to resonate deeply with readers. Stay tuned for the recommended Lent 2022 book!
- Our first digital confirmation preparation course **Why Believe?**, facilitated by Donna Ellis, Children, Youth Family and Young Adults Coordinator, St. John Ancaster and Sarah Bird Program Consultant – Children, Youth Family and Young Adults (CYFM), was successfully launched, and confirmands and their families are patiently waiting for pandemic protocols to allow us to gather for a diocesan confirmation service.
- **The Table**, an online gathering for young adults met throughout the year occasionally connecting with guests such as Bishop Susan who responded to questions about her ministry and her faith life.
- **Sparking Children's Faith** led by a diocesan team of Children's Ministry parish leaders has been running successfully via Zoom throughout the year. A grant application to the Anglican Foundation's *Say Yes to Kids* fund is in the works to provide technology to families to further the reach of digital faith formation as well as to provide technology and digital faith formation training to parish CYFM leaders.

- Faith Formation boxes, created by the diocesan Children's Ministry team, were delivered to registered families for Christmas vacation and during the summer to create an at-home Vacation Bible School faith experience for children.
- An evening with **Sarah Bessey** and a clergy retreat led by Sarah deeply engaged and fed many from across the diocese in June. Sarah's intimate relationship with and deep love for Jesus as well as her own faith story genuinely touched our hearts and spoke to our souls.
- We continue to plant faith communities this year; a new intentional community gathering at Christ's Church Cathedral called Cathedral Community of Prayer, and another soon to launch out of the new All Saints site in Hamilton. Last year's church plant, St. Luke's Common Prayer in Hamilton continues under the leadership of Rob Miller.
- Celebrated online our second annual Pride service which included a new liturgy for affirming the newly named.
- Mission in Acts (Chinese Anglican Ministry) continues to flourish under the guidance of the Rev. Garfield Wu in partnership with St. Luke's Palermo, and St. Simon's, St. Aidan's and St. Cuthbert's in Oakville with significant financial donations, grant funding, and new volunteers engaged in a burgeoning faith journey and new community initiatives.

Reimagine Diocesan Culture and Adapt Our Structures to Enable Ministry

- Now grounded in newly discerned vision and mission statements, the Niagara School for Missional Leadership is officially launched:
 - *Our Vision: to create a coaching and praxis-based learning environment where participants are equipped to respond creatively and faithfully to God's mission*
 - *Our Mission: The Niagara School for Missional Leadership, a Gospel-focused learning community, trains effective missional leaders to respond to the needs of God's world*
- The Niagara School for Missional Leadership (NSML) piloted two courses in both the winter and spring with great success as practitioner-teachers Bishop Susan, John Bowen, Leanne Friesen and Canon Ian Mobsby engaged learners in missional preaching, a missional church primer, responding to God's invitation to be more than just the comfy church, and creating new monastic communities. The success of those courses led to the launch of the school this autumn with eight courses being offered:
 - Adaptive Leadership in Anxious Times: Called to Lead When You Don't Know Where You are Going with Archbishop Colin Johnson
 - Connecting with Indigenous Knowledge with Archdeacon Val Kerr and Janice Whiteley
 - Christian Foundations: From Abraham to Jesus with Pat Paulsen
 - Cultivating Missional Disciples: Christian Practice for Mission in Daily Life with Archdeacon David Anderson
 - Developing a Contemplative Prayer Life: A Twelve-Step Approach with Canon Ian Mobsby
 - Missional Preaching with Bishop Susan Bell
 - Reimagining Church with John Bowen
 - Stewardship: A Faithful Response to God's Mission with Gillian Doucet Campbell

- In addition, the NSML team, alongside the newly hired coordinator, Charles Meeks, oversaw the development of a new website <http://nsml.ca> where you can find more information about upcoming courses and the practitioner-instructors as well as the school. Charles' role encompasses coordinating administration and governance, managing course enrollment, supporting the practitioner-instructors, and administering the website and the new learning platform.
- We were nurtured by constant and transparent guidance from the Bishop and Executive Officer & Secretary of Synod about the impact of COVID-19 public health policies on our shared communal life, liturgical and pastoral care practices with attentiveness to imagining new ways of connecting, sharing stories and being present to one another.
- The Executive Office & Secretary of Synod, the Chancellor and Synod Council continue to update policies, regulations and canons in order to simplify and clarify the governance and functioning of the diocese including a change to our investment policy, a change to Canon 2.10 establishing a formula for the annual contributions of Christ's Church Cathedral to the diocese, and a new diocesan safe church policy.
- The Anti-Racism Working Group spent the past year learning how to be together, to hear one another's stories with respect and patience, and to dwell in the Spirit until there is a sense of readiness to move. The group has heard the Spirit say "NOW" and will be presenting their plans for 2022 which include an anti-racism training program for clergy, a similar program for parishes, a training program for facilitators, and human resources policies that affirm diversity, equity and inclusion.
- The new Missional Budget Planning Committee has been hard at work developing a budget that reflects our diocesan Mission Action Plan. You'll see the results of their labours in the budget presented to Synod.
- Technology grants were provided to 35 parishes to enable them to create digital worship and faith formation experiences, both quite new experiences over the past 19 months as we have been dealing with the limitations necessitated by the pandemic. The value and benefits of offering these experiences online suggests that many parishes will continue to utilize these digital missional tools in the future.
- A Stewardship Network to support parish teams has more than 60 people from 20+ parishes participating in regional groups with the intention of deepening parishes' stewarding discipleship and their stewardship practices. They are reading of *Growing the Generous Church*, a book which Gillian Doucet Campbell, Director of Stewardship and Development recommends it to all.
- The Greater St. Catharines Animation Team offered a workshop on exploring the post-pandemic world through the lens of linking evangelism and digital platforms. A follow-up to this well received workshop with Jeremy Elliott will be offered in the coming months.

Prioritize social justice action with an emphasis on environmental justice

- The development of a team of volunteers guiding the diocese in responding to human trafficking with an inaugural advocacy training event involving 88 participants in March.
- Climate Justice Niagara explored with participants the intersection of poverty and the climate crisis; the impact of the climate crisis on people with the least resources in a June workshop, **Poverty and the Climate Crisis – No Vaccine!**

- Parishes and affiliated ministries utilized grants totalling around \$40,000 dollars from the Pandemic Response Fund to combat food insecurity and provide pandemic relief ministries to people in crisis in their neighbourhoods and broader communities.
- The month of September saw the diocese marking both Climate Action Month with Kairos resources and the Season of Creation, a Canadian ecumenical climate justice campaign offering liturgical, educational and advocacy resources.
- A faithful response to our baptismal covenant to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being” underscored **Niagara in Action** in September where a digital version of PWRDF’s **Mapping the Ground We Stand On** was offered to a capacity crowd (and will be offered regionally in the coming months). Niagara in Action also hosted **Creating 2SLGBTQ+ Positive Space**, facilitated by Deirdre Pike, Program Consultant, Justice and Outreach, and that training about becoming allies, advocates and accomplices will also be offered again.
- In an effort to deepen knowledge and connect with some of the pain associated with racism against indigenous peoples, parishes continued to host viewings and subsequent discussions of the Doctrine of Discovery video. This year as our Truth and Reconciliation work has deepened, we marked September 30 as a day for truth and healing with programs at parishes as well as with an Anglican Church of Canada video service of reflection and prayer, ***Every Child Matters: Grace Will Lead Them Home*** which invited Anglicans to walk with a group of Anglican Elders on a journey of grief and sorrow for the hurt and injustices of the past and present.

In addition to this work at the diocesan level, parishes continued to prioritize prayer and discipleship, transformation of parish culture and justice issues. Some parishes have completed parish mission action plans, others are beginning this work and still others are eagerly awaiting the Parish Mission Action Plan (MAP) guide which will be accessible to parishes shortly. It’s clear that the Anglican Christians in Niagara continue to follow boldly where God calls us to life and compels us to love; moving forward towards the kingdom.

Respectfully submitted,

Canon Christyn Perkons
Director of Congregational Support & Development