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THE DIOCESAN ARCHIVIST

It is only fitting that this report begins with a tribute to Archdeacon John Rathbone, who died on June 15, 2023. After his retirement from parish ministry, John diligently served as the diocesan archivist for more than a quarter century. His mind and written notes held so much of our history as a diocese, and through his efforts so much of this has been preserved in our archives.

Since 1975, McMaster University has overseen the storage of non-current diocesan records dating back to 1875, parish registers, service books, minute books, and other material from more than 100 congregations. The records are on deposit only and remain the property of the diocese. The care and upkeep of the diocesan archives are governed under Canon 2.6.

The diocesan archives kept at Cathedral Place include:

- synod journals from 1875 to present;
- copies of Niagara Anglican from 1975 to present;
- personnel files of deceased or retired clergy;
- parish files, current or closed, including some parish histories and clergy biographies;
- some artifacts of our ministry;
- confirmation records; and
- some blueprints or drawings of past construction or additions.

In the past year, we have consulted with McMaster University to review the materials we currently hold at Cathedral Place and to undertake an assessment of our practices for storing, cataloguing, and preserving our heritage. We are excited by the possibility of engaging a summer student in the future, in partnership with the university, to support our ongoing archival efforts.

As public acts, records related to baptisms, marriages and burials are held in trust for the participants and for the whole church and are thereby parishes and the diocese are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the records. Lorna Shaw receives and processes requests for records that are held by the diocese, primarily related to disestablished parishes. All such archival inquiries should to be directed to lorna.shaw@niagaraanglican.ca.

Respectfully submitted,

The Venerable Bill Mous
Executive Officer & Secretary of Synod

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THE CLIMATE JUSTICE NIAGARA COMMITTEE

The Lambeth Calls on environmental and sustainable development has been the guiding framework of Climate Justice Niagara (CJN) in 2023. It urgently calls for a deeper Anglican commitment to tackle the three simultaneous environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. CJN has been focused on supporting parishes to respond to these environmental crises in the following ways:

1. Becoming a low-carbon church by completing walk-through energy audits to analyze the carbon footprint of parish buildings with the creation of a 5-year plan to cut down greenhouse emissions by 10% by 2030
 - 29 (out of 80) parishes have signed up and are working towards the goal
 - hosted a hybrid meeting “The Roadmap to a Low-carbon Church” on October 22 at The Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer, Stoney Creek
 - assisted in the creation of a national effort - Zero Emission Churches (<https://zeroemissionchurches.ca>), and now working with 5 other Anglican dioceses in Canada to convert parish buildings into zero emitters
 - created a printable booklet and data base link for parishes to conduct self-guided energy audits and collect utility data to be analyzed
 - collaborated with Humber College to adopt the use of infra-red thermal imaging for more effective energy audit
2. Becoming a steward of biodiversity by intentional tree planting and building pollinator habitats
 - 13 parishes were awarded garden certificates to recognise their works on creating pollinator and vegetable gardens
 - leading the diocesan Communion Forest initiative, heeding the call from the Lambeth Conference, to encourage tree preservation, restoration, and planting across the Diocese of Niagara
 - St. George’s Georgetown, being the first parish to take action under this initiative, planted a mini-forest of native trees and shrubs on September 24
3. Becoming a champion of low-waste ministry practice - We acknowledged this work was greatly slowed by the pandemic, though over 40 parishes have passed the motion of banning single use plastics. We continue to encourage parishes to use reusable materials in ministry and cultivate a creative mindset to serve others without causing harm to God’s creation. We congratulate St. John’s, Jordan, and All Saints, Ridgeway, as they became Accredited Green Parishes (Bronze level) in March.

Other highlights of the work of our committee have been:

Prayer and Liturgy: organized the first-ever Climate Justice Sunday (April 23), providing liturgy, CJN prayer and action items for parishes under the theme of “Make Peace with Creation”.

Education:

1. Presentations in regional clergy meetings about energy audit and communion forest
2. Visual for all parishes – “5 small acts with big impacts all parish can do in 2023”
3. Monthly article in Niagara Anglican
4. Speaking and preaching in various parishes

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Action and Advocacy:

1. Speaking up for Greenbelt protection by writing a letter to the provincial government in February
2. Bishop Susan added her voice by making 2 videos for Climate Justice Sunday and Season of Creation respectively. She also presented a motion, submitted by former CJN members, at the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in June, to set climate emergency as a priority.
3. Initiated conversation to forge the path to fossil-free investment – first meeting in May and will continue to facilitate discussion on how to align diocese investment with climate priority and make a positive impact on social and environmental justice.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Pang
Chair

THE ANTI-RACISM WORKING GROUP

The Anti-Racism Working Group has led the effort to develop Anti-Racism Training for the Diocese of Niagara since 2020. Through education and training taken on by the working group members, they have created a series of training modules for use in a pilot test program for 2023.

The work in 2022 and 2023 included:

- Continued dialogue about the particular needs of the diocese pertaining to the curriculum.
- Editing the current training modules.
- Engaging Evelyn Myrie, of EMpower Strategy Group, in editing the final anti-racism training curriculum which will be piloted in 2023.

In June 2023, Bishop Susan Bell led a celebration of the group's work over the last three years. She particularly noted the leadership provided by the Reverend Naomi Kabugi, and former Director of Congregational Development and Support, Canon Christyn Perkons, who co-chaired the group from its inception.

The work has now been transferred to the Justice and Outreach Program Consultant Deirdre Pike who will be leading the "train-the-trainer" sessions this year in preparation for the training of all the clergy of the diocese in 2024 and 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

The Reverend Naomi Kabugi
Chair

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THE DIOCESAN REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

Over the last year, parishes and community groups across our diocese have continued to sponsor refugees from around the world, providing essential orientation and care for newcomers as they are resettled in Canada.

According to information from the United Nations Refugee Agency, at the end of 2021, the total number of people worldwide who were forced to flee their homes due to conflicts, violence, fear of persecution, and human rights violations was 89.3 million. This is more than double the 42.7 million people who remained forcibly displaced a decade ago and, once again, the highest level since World War II.

Since the last report to Synod in September 2022, our diocese has:

- submitted applications for 10 new sponsorship cases totalling 41 people; and
- welcomed 38 newcomers to Canada, representing 22 sponsorship cases, from Eritrea, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Our diocese undertakes this ministry as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. A new five-year agreement was approved by Synod Council on September 19, 2023, after the diocese successfully met the revalidation requirements of the SAH organization assessment.

As with all ministries of the Church, this work happens because of passion and faithfulness of parishioners and people in the communities we serve. In addition, there is a team of dedicated volunteers and staff who help support this diocesan ministry, helping us live into our responsibilities as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder. We continue to search for a new coordinator for this important ministry. If you are interested in learning more about this work, or generally supporting our refugee sponsorship efforts, please email refugees@niagaraanglican.ca.

Respectfully submitted,

The Venerable Bill Mous
Coordinator, Diocesan Refugee Sponsorship Initiative

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THE CATHEDRAL PLACE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Cathedral Place Property Management Committee has been active this year not just in caring for Cathedral Place (CP), but in striving to ensure that it can be an effective and flexible asset for ministry in the diocese. We are truly grateful to Cathedral Place's Property Manager, Mr. Derek Smith for his diligent leadership and partnership in this work.

The most significant project since last Synod has been the replacement of flat roof sections over the 'schoolhouse' portion of CP. Long a source of leaks and other challenges, this work will prevent further damage while keeping those people using the building safer and more comfortable.

Perhaps the most obvious work over the past year have been the updates to Myler Hall—a vital ministry resource. Anyone in CP will see Myler Hall in active use. It's the room most often used for diocesan meetings (and meetings of other bodies), for receptions after Cathedral and diocesan services, and for active outreach. The Cathedral Café serves as a rest centre for unhoused and precariously housed people on multiple days each week. More than just a spot to rest in a climate-controlled environment with refreshment, deep personal engagement is supplemented with attention to physical needs including clothing. Storage, deep cleaning, and updated audio-visual supports have made Myler Hall a warm and welcoming place for meetings and ministry, and more attractive as a rental option for outside groups.

CPPMC offers deep thanks to Wendy Newman and her team for their work spearheading a grant application to install a new hearing support system in the Cathedral proper. With the success of that grant being awarded, we look forward to improved accessibility options for services and events.

Use of the Cathedral proper for anything other than worship has been a challenge because some aspects of the space do not meet fire code needs, sharply limiting the size of gatherings. CPPMC secured a report about what is needed to allow for more flexible use of the space, and upgrade work has begun and will continue in the new year.

A Cathedral Place Use of Space Policy has been developed and adopted by CPPMC to help make decisions around rentals and other ways the space is used to support the work of the Church.

Since May of 1986, Cathedral Place has been designated by Hamilton City Council as an historic property and registered with the Ontario Heritage Trust. The by-law that enacted the registration notes in particular the exterior elements of the facades (e.g. stone walls, buttresses, tracery windows, etc.); architectural features of the nave (chancel, windows, etc.); and the wrought-iron fence on James St. North.

This year, the CPPMC commissioned and received a report studying the condition of the heritage attributes of the exterior of Cathedral Place. The report specifies significant work that needs to be attended to preserve the building's distinctive features and support our on-going ministry. CPPMC has begun discussing how best to address this work in the years ahead, and prioritizing aspects of the work. This work will require additional funding beyond current levels.

Respectfully submitted,

The Reverend Canon Matthew Griffin
Chair

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THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING JUSTICE NIAGARA WORKING GROUP

Human Trafficking Justice Niagara (HTJN) continues to follow the lead of the General Synod 2019 Resolution [A204 Human Trafficking and Modern slavery](#), equipping the people of the diocese to live more deeply into the Fourth Mark of Mission and our diocesan Mission Action Plan to be strong advocates for local and global change in the following ways:

- **Prayer** – Ensure that prayers and concern for human trafficking become an integral part of parish life, particularly on National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, the third Sunday of February.
- **Education** – Equip and inspire social justice facilitators and teams by developing and disseminating current local resources and evidence-based knowledge about modern day slavery, human trafficking and forced labour.
- **Action** – Provide facilitators, clergy and lay leaders with the tools to ensure their parishes are able to assist local outreach in support of victims of human trafficking.
- **Advocacy** – Model strong leadership and resolute political action to address human trafficking and modern-day slavery. Support parish and Diocesan leaders in recognizing the presence of trafficking in our communities and ways to speak out against it.

Over the past year, HTJN members:

- Met regularly to keep up to date on human trafficking stories in Canada and beyond, review educational resources, and make plans to deliver on the mandate.
- Hosted a diocesan webinar with a panel of experts from Niagara and Hamilton to assist participants in understanding local realities and resources available to address them.
- Assembled more liturgical resources for parish use for Freedom Sunday.
- Presented information to Clericus meetings to further the education of clergy and licensed lay workers.

Respectfully submitted,

The Reverend Jody Szoke
Chair

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THE NIAGARA SCHOOL FOR MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE

The Niagara School for Missional Leadership (NSML) is a Gospel-focused learning community based in the Diocese of Niagara that trains effective missional leaders (both clergy and lay) to respond to the needs of God's world. The school centres its learning on the Good News of Jesus Christ – that the Church is called to participate in Jesus' mission in the world in bringing about the Kingdom of God. Jesus calls us to life and compels us to love, and as we live into and out of this calling, the kingdom breaks into the world around us.

The mandate of the NSML Steering Committee is to support the school's vision of creating a practical and coaching based learning environment where participants are equipped to respond creatively and faithfully to God's mission. The work of the Committee shall include providing input regarding the development and administration of the school, promotions, finances, and monitoring alignment between the school's operations and the school's mission and vision.

In the past year, a few highlights of our ministry have been:

- Over 300 students have been served by the school, with 27 course offerings since the launch in September of 2021.
- Welcoming new teacher practitioners: Jon Swales, Alice Brencher, and Mark Dunwoody.
- The introduction of the diaconate preparation pathway, offering specialized classes to support those discerning the call to ministry.
- The piloting of Climate Justice, Following Jesus in a World of Climate Breakdown, a class developed to offer group learning opportunities for parishes across the diocese.
- Continued and ongoing changes to the school's website and administrative platforms to promote efficiency and diocesan brand alignment.

Over the last few months, the NSML Steering Committee devoted time to review the parish mission action plans that were submitted to the diocese. Each MAP provided rich insight that marked new visions, priorities, needs, and initiatives that will provide a guide for future NSML class offerings, formation pathways, and trainings. The Niagara School for Missional Leadership will continue to live through the diocesan missional action plan objectives to *create and implement opportunities to ignite and strengthen faith, reimagine culture, and prioritize justice* by developing practical, accessible, and culturally relevant studies, ignited by the irresistible love of Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Smith
Chair