

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

Focus:

It is our desire that the Church be a safe and holy place for all whom our ministry effects.

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

It is our work to develop policy and a body of knowledge that embody “best practice resources” within Niagara. As a body clergy and laity, some of us are trained in law, social work, and in ministry as well as in the investigation of situations where misconduct is alleged to have taken place.

Activities:

During this past year, we have continued to provide basic education to clergy and lay people in the creation of an environment of a Safe Church. This includes the prevention of individual misconduct, but goes beyond that to support individuals in the maintenance of healthy interpersonal boundaries. We are consult with congregations about the planning of physical plants, and work at creating a safe environment in which both individuals and the community can function. In the past year, we dealt with two parish situations requiring investigations, and on an informal basis, coached a number of individuals through personal and professional challenges.

One significant piece of work in the past year was the triennial congregational audit report for Volunteer Management and Screening. Although this needs to be an ongoing process in the parish (and indeed is less onerous when managed that way), every three years, we ask each congregation and community within the Diocese to give us a “snap shot” of the volunteer management within the parish, including such things as job descriptions and risk assessments. This past year, Laurie Adamson and Sheila Buddell assisted us in the process of evaluating the submissions to the Diocese regarding Volunteer Management. To date 56 parishes have responded with Volunteer Management and Screening reports. We are indebted to Joyce Wilton, for the excellent job she has done in this area in the past, and for helping us “get off the ground” this past year. Many thanks go as well to Jane Wyse, for her extensive knowledge of this programme and her excellent administration of it.

In June of the past year, it was my privilege to be sent by Bishop Bird to “Partnering for Prevention” in Victoria B.C. This was a world-wide Anglican Communion event where a number of individuals from Africa, the United States, England, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Philippines gathered to share their approaches to creating and maintaining a healthy church community. Whether it is called Safe Church, or as it is called in England, “Safeguarding”, the end result, we hope, is the same.

Support is available for parishes, regions and clericus groups to educate people around the nature of harassment, abuse and the misuse of power.

This past year, we have said farewell to the Reverend Canon Robin Graves, who although he is not an “official member” of the committee, has brought his pastoral gifts to several Safe Church consultations. We will miss you Robin, both as a colleague and as a friend.

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We thank individuals who are involved with the work of this committee, especially Canon Robert Welch, Diocesan Chancellor; Ms. Joyce Wilton; Mr. David Ricketts, our Diocesan Insurance Agent; the Reverend Canon Barry Randle; Mrs. Alison D'Atri and Ms. Jane Wyse all of whom continue to give generously of their time in special projects of the Safe Church Task Force.

Members during the past year were:

The Right Reverend Michael A. Bird

Mr. Graeme Leach

The Reverend Deacon Roderick McDowell

The Reverend Canon Marni Nancekivell (Chair)

The Venerable Jim Sandilands

Ms. Joyce Wilton

Respectfully submitted,

The Reverend Canon Marni Nancekivell, Chair