

REPORT OF THE GREENING NIAGARA COMMITTEE

Introduction

In the words of the Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation:

Our planetary crisis is environmental, but it is more than that. It is a crisis of the Spirit and the Body, which runs to the core of all that we hold sacred.... As people of faith, Christ draws us together to share responsibility for this crisis with all humanity.

In our diocese, our churches and our people have long expressed a concern for creation that is consistent with the fifth mark of mission of the Anglican Communion: "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth".

The Greening Niagara committee seeks to enable all of us to live out this mark of mission as part of our commitment to God's mission and ministry in our world.

Formation of the Committee

At the invitation of Bishop Michael Bird and Archdeacon Michael Patterson, we began the process of forming the Greening Niagara Committee, a standalone committee of Synod Council, in April 2007. The committee's formation came about as a direct result of a request by our Diocesan Synod in 2007. Bishop Bird asked the committee to look at ways in which we might enable and animate parishes in the diocese to be better environmental custodians of creation.

The first meeting of the new committee of fourteen members from across our diocese took place in June. In forming the committee an appreciation for diverse voices and experiences was central to our thinking. At our first meeting, we gathered together to share their interests and wisdom about the committee's work, and to develop an initial plan for the work of the committee as it gets off the ground.

Development of Mandate

Over the summer months a small group of committee members worked on the Greening Niagara committee's mandate. At the time of writing, a draft mandate has been created which outlines the immediate priorities of the committee and the scope of its work in our diocese. It will be taken to the fall meeting of the Greening Niagara committee for approval by the whole committee and then forwarded to Synod Council for approval.

Working Groups

Committee members were asked to join one of three working groups – developed based on the identified priorities of the committee – based upon their particular gifts and interests. The working groups are as follows:

Policy & Procedures Working: This working group will strive to develop and implement diocesan policies for all aspects of our mission and ministry that minimize our negative impact on creation through sustainable practices. In addition, it will implement, in partnership with the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Church Buildings (BACCB), a process by which parishes and diocesan ministries are encouraged to undertake initiatives which reduce their impact on the environment. We're grateful to the BACCB for an invitation to liaise with the work of their committee and are delighted that Michael Skafel has agreed to be our liaison. The group's convener is Bill Mous.

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Educational Initiatives Working Group: This group will reflect theologically about issues pertaining to creation, and compile resources to educate the people and parishes of our diocese about environmental issues and sustainable practices from a faith perspective. This group has already submitted several articles to the Niagara Anglican, and hopes to redevelop the Greening Niagara webpage in the coming months to better serve our diocese. One can also expect regional education days and theological resources to be produced from this group as it gets off the ground. This group is convened by Russ Kelk.

Animating Parishes Working Group : As requested by Synod, this group will equip and inspire local parish advocates and green teams by developing resources, initiating a green parish accreditation program and disseminating information about external resources such as funding grants and related programs. Many parishes have already formed a 'green team' to help them work through issues related to the stewardship of creation. If you haven't already, perhaps you might appoint a Green Advocate or gather together interested members of your congregation to form a Green Team. Our thanks to Susan Curran who has agreed to convene this working group.

Greening Niagara Kits

The diocese purchased six Greening Sacred Spaces kits from Faith and the Common Good, a multi-faith organization that supports environmental stewardship. They are an excellent resource with information, videos and posters to help your parish with its greening work. One kit has been made available to each region; please contact Karen Nowicki at the Diocesan Resource Centre (karen.nowicki@niagara.anglican.ca) for more information.

The Way Forward

Building on the work of grass-roots efforts from groups in our diocese like Undermount Regional Council and our Youth Synod, the Greening Niagara committee will continue learning about and taking action towards addressing the complex issues facing our diocese with respect to its care of creation. Our goal is to be partners with the parishes and people of our diocese. We hope that in the course of your work you'll share wisdom with our committee so that we can share it throughout the diocese. Please contact Russ Kelk (firstrover@aol.com) or Bill Mous (billstjames@bellnet.ca) with information and resources that we might share with the diocese or if we can be of assistance to you in the work of your parish or ministry.

Committee members

Mrs. Catharine Bennett
Ms. Sue Carson
Ms. Sarah Clarke
Ms. Susan Curran
Mrs. Patricia Davis
Mr. Michael Edwards
The Reverend George Henry

Mr. Russ Kelk, Co-Chair
The Reverend Bill Mous, Co-Chair
The Reverend Laura Marie Piotrowicz
Mr. Michael Skafel
Mr. Dean Sutton-Greenhalgh
The Venerable Michael Patterson,
Staff Support
Mrs. Karen Nowicki, Staff Support

Respectfully submitted,
Mr. Russell Kelk and
The Reverend Bill Mous, Co-Chairs