

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

Focus:

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, 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.

Our primary activity this past year continues to be the provision of a basic orientation to our Diocesan publication: *Sexual Misconduct Policy, Sexual Harassment, exploitation and Assault*. Training extends beyond maintaining “the letter of the law”, and assists individuals in the identification of circumstances, behaviours and practises which create the potential for unwholesome interactions to occur.

We continue to work at the revision of this policy, and significant strides have taken place within the past year.

A major task this past year, has been that of working at bringing the Diocese of Niagara up to the civil code, with the introduction of Bill 168 on Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention. A policy in that regard is slated to be presented to Synod Council in October of 2010.

As well, we exist to respond to and investigate situations where there is a concern that misconduct may have taken place. Wherever individuals have felt that the church is not a “safe place” for the, following protocol, an investigation can occur.

Members of the committee are also available for parishes, regions and Clericus groups to educate people around the nature of harassment, abuse and the misuse of power.

In addition to those who are members of this task force, we thank other individuals who are involved with the work of this committee, especially Canon Robert Welch, Diocesan Chancellor, Mr. David Ricketts, our Diocesan Insurance Agent, and Mrs. Alison D’Atri all of whom continue to give generously of their time in special projects of the Safe Church Task Force.

There is an intrinsic connection between the work of this task force and the work of the Volunteer Screening and Management group, which has functioned until this year under the guidance of Joyce Wilton. We wish Joyce well in her retirement, and are grateful that she has offered to continue to consult with this group.

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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