

Safe Church Report to Synod 2015-2016

In the past year, the Diocesan Safe Church Team has provided education, consultation support, and when necessary, an investigative team in a variety of settings. From parish churches to inter-diocesan situations, from youth events to Canterbury Hills education and consultation, the Safe Church Team has been present. We have had six “situational consultations” in the past year that have demanded in varying levels of involvement and response by the Team.

This past year, we invited Marion Little, formerly the Safe Church Coordinator of the Diocese of British Columbia to be the key note presenter at a Basic Safe Church Education Event. Marion's energy in her presentation was boundless. Present at that event were parish priests, deacons, musicians, lay workers and others.

In the past year, we also called together a configuration of three groups, to see us into the future of our Safe Church policy. One group is in the midst of re-writing policy, another group is interested in consultation, and yet another group is prepared to work in the area of education. The policy group is the first group to be deployed and is has reviewed Safe Church policies from around the globe, and is also looking at misconduct policies in other not for profit organizations as well as in industry. The Diocese of Niagara is intentionally broadening our volunteer base in this area, bringing together individuals of different ages, sexual orientations and backgrounds as we work together at discerning what it is to be a Safer Church. We are working with social workers, former government officials, lawyers, educators, corrections officials, lay people and clergy, all of whom bring a varied expertise in the area of misconduct and boundary violations.

We have invested in a resource from the Faith Trust Institute this year, entitled: Teaching Healthy Boundaries 101 and 201. We look forward to using this resource within the next year. Healthy Boundaries are about far more than Clergy Sexual Misconduct. “A perfect storm occurs when... vulnerabilities and systemic congregational anxiety interact, leading to burnout and boundary problems that hinder pastoral excellence”. (Saying No to say Yes), David C. Olsen and Nancy G. Devor, Rowman and Littlefield, 2015)

Whether we are clergy or church school teacher, deacons or working with newcomers, may we practise being a Safer Church, grounded in self-awareness, strong support systems and wise choices, for ourselves and for others.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev'd. Canon Marni Nancekivell,
Secretary of Synod,
Director of Safe Church, Volunteer Management and Screening