

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 affects.

As a faith community, the Anglican Diocese of Niagara is deeply committed to fostering an environment 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, misconduct, interpersonal violence, exploitation or intimidation.

In order to create a safer church, it is our mandate to share a body of knowledge that embodies “best practice resources” within Niagara. A significant part of our work therefore, is that of educating and mentoring lay people and clergy within the Diocese. We offer workshops, some of which are mandatory (such as our basic policy orientation), and others which are tailored to regional or parish need (such as workshops designed for Church School and Youth workers and volunteers, those who work with fragile adults, or those working to maintain Healthy Boundaries, etc.). In addition to our work with Safe Church, a now related part of our work is the piece of Volunteer Management and Screening.

However, in terms of the hours spent on Safe Church we work most extensively in the investigation of situations where misconduct is alleged to have taken place, with pastoral concern both for the person making the complaint as well as the alleged perpetrator.

Although originally, the task of maintaining a Safer Church was “reactive”, increasingly, we focus as well on being “proactive” in our work.

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 have also worked at resolving five formal complaints, and on an informal basis, coached a number of individuals through personal and professional challenges. Support is always available for parishes, regions and clericus groups to educate people around the nature of harassment, abuse and the misuse of power.

We thank individuals who are involved with the work of this group, especially Bishop Michael Bird, Canon Robert Welch, Diocesan Chancellor; The Venerable Jim Sandilands, The Reverend Max Woolaver, The Reverend Pam Guyatt, Ms. Nancy Blackie, Mr. David Ricketts, our outgoing Diocesan Insurance Broker; Mrs. Alison D’Atri and Ms. Jane Wyse all of whom continue to give generously of their time and of their considerable talents in the work of the Bishop’s Committee for a Safer Church.

Respectfully submitted,
The Reverend Canon Marni Nancekivell, Chair