

REPORT OF YOUTH SYNOD IN ACTION

After years of debating and passing social justice motions at Youth Synod, a call to move in a different direction was discerned and so was born **Youth Synod in Action** (“YSA”), a pilot event, created in partnership by the youth and social justice ministries of the Diocese. The goal of the event was to allow delegates to engage directly with social justice advocates and people victimized by unjust social structures. What a life-changing experience – for the youth, the adult volunteer staff, and the community groups and individuals who partnered with us in this adventure!

Friday evening began with a plenary session presented by Tom Cooper (Director of The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction) focusing on the concept of social justice and why it matters. Alongside Tom’s work, Heather McCully and a group of youth facilitators from Hamilton Public Health facilitated a “Social Determinants of Health” game in which YSA delegates were the game board pieces. An eye-opening kick off for Youth Synod in Action! Saturday saw the delegates in various immersion groups learning about social justice through the lens of a particular issue and getting alongside where God was at work in the broader community.



Corporate Social Responsibility: guided by Eileen Tallach of Ten Thousand Villages, the group followed an orientation to fair trade practices with a tour of socially responsible local businesses (including Textures, Goodness Me, Citizen Kid, Ten Thousand Villages) in the Locke Street Business Improvement Area which included conversations, samples, and a debrief at St. John’s along with take-home materials.

Environmental Justice: this group were actively engaged with local volunteers at the Victory Garden, the Bike Co-op, and Good Shepherd – all of which echoed the foundational introduction to environmental justice provided by Beatrice Ekoko of Environment Hamilton.



Indigenous Justice: our partnership with the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre saw this group of delegates participating in the “blanket exercise”, learning about traditional teachings, exploring current issues from an indigenous perspective, and experiencing First Nations cuisine.

Food Security: a morning with Alvaro Venturelli of Plan B farm in West Flamborough coupled with an afternoon at Living Rock gave these delegates two different perspectives; organic, fair trade food provider and homeless adolescents with very limited access to food.



Poverty: a walking tour of downtown Hamilton with stops at the Discovery Program at Freeway Café, Beasley Recreation Centre, and Living Rock enabled these delegates to learn how advocates get alongside people in the community to enable them to voice their perspective and maximize their resources.

Refugees: Micah House Refugee Reception Centre gave this group an inside viewpoint of life as a new refugee in Canada as they heard first hand stories of leaving beloved communities and the struggle to create a new life for themselves and their families. The delegates went on a city scavenger hunt to get a look at the city from a “new to Canada” point of view – and they helped make Micah House more welcoming by doing a bit of caretaking around the property.



Social Inclusion and Exclusion: delegates who spent the day with Marcus Logan from Positive Space Network of Halton earned their certificate as allies of the LGBTQ community through Positive Space education, engaging in dialogue about their own perceptions and language, and hearing and sharing stories of inclusion and exclusion.

Youth Synod in Action drew to a close on Sunday with presentations from each of the immersion groups followed by planning session focused on connecting with social justice issues in delegates’ local contexts. We acknowledge with thanks the gracious welcome we received from our host parish, Christ’s Church Cathedral, and especially the support from The Rev. Sue Channen and Alison Meredith! We are deeply grateful for meals and snacks provided by St. Paul’s (Sandi Harper), The Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer, St. Alban the Martyr, and Karin Pasma (St. Luke’s, Burlington) as well as the indomitable Cathedral team led by Louise van Woelderren

and Hazel Naylor. The immersion experiences would not have happened without the incredible leadership provided by Jenny Harper, Donna Ellis and Nancy Millar – and the whole event was, as usual, dependent on the skills, care and compassion of the diocesan youth ministry volunteers!



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