

Living Our Vision for Ministry

The Bishop and diocesan staff are hearing vision-shaped good news stories all over the Diocese as they travel to meet with parishioners and parish staff. There are new ministry partnerships emerging in Guelph and St. Catharines; refugee families settling into communities across the diocese; recently appointed Archdeacons with responsibility for Truth, Reconciliation & Indigenous Ministry, and Ministry Leadership Development who are already engaging us in new opportunities; innovative WOW projects; Conflict Management workshops; repayment of long-term debt, new community partners, grants to support community ministry, and the stories go on...

In the midst of these stories of grace, hope and transformation, the vision groups are meeting less regularly as the vision becomes embedded in our DNA. Nevertheless, opportunities for learning and innovation continue to emerge as we pursue each aspect of our diocesan vision amongst vision groups members and the wider diocesan community.

Journeys in Faith

Journeys in Faith undertakes to recommend books to the Bishop to consider for his annual Lent book and were pleased that the Diocese was invited to read *In God's Hands* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu during Lent 2016. Reflections and questions were provided for parish study groups and for individual use. The JiF group has been working with Life Changing Worship on a revamp of the Bishop's Diploma Course and that work is ongoing.

Life Changing Worship

The Diocese of Niagara co-sponsored the National Anglican Lutheran Worship Conference held July 24-27, 2016 at Wilfrid Laurier University and ten Niagara liturgy leaders participated (many with LCW bursaries). In addition, members of the group are working hand in hand with member of JiF to reimagine the Bishop's Diploma Course, an ongoing process. New liturgy and music resources have been added to the diocesan library from which parishes are welcome to borrow at any time.

Continuous Culture of Innovation

The successful annual Re-church conference continues to be the focus for this group, and by the time you read this, the 2016 conference "Healthy Leaders Deepening Mission; Applying Spiritual Principles of Leadership" with guest speaker, Kevin Martin, author of *Five Keys for Church Leaders*, will have just concluded. This follows on Kevin's powerful 2015 Re-Church offering which focused on Healthy Communities and Building the Mission Team. Details can be found at www.rechurchnow.com

Generous Culture of Stewardship

Much of this work is being handled by the Stewardship, Legacy Giving and Fund Development Consultant, Lisa Di Veto, who has been assiduously meeting with parish leadership teams to discern more effective ways of preserving and increasing financial assets. Lisa also offers regular grant workshops which have been very effective in leveraging parish engagement resulting in successful grant applications. For example, with assistance from Lisa several parishes and affiliates were successful in receiving Canada Summer Jobs grants. Lisa is also developing legacy documents, in memoriam brochures, and a Best Practices workshop around annual giving.

Outstanding Leadership for Ministry

In May 2016, Bishop Bird appointed the Venerable Dr. Steve Hopkins as Archdeacon for Ministry Leadership Development to support him and other diocesan leaders in equipping clergy and lay leaders to nurture disciples and grow missional communities in accordance with our diocesan vision. Overall, Steve hopes to foster curiosity about leadership and enhance access to resources for learning. Initiatives to date include a preliminary conversation and questionnaire at the June 2016 Clergy and Layworkers' Conference, launching "Diving Deeper: the Niagara Internship in Reflective Pastoral Practice" (with Dr. Lori Edey and Terry DeForest), creating a Missional Leadership Learning Circle composed of clergy supporting each other to develop a new style of parish leadership, preparing to launch a Facebook group called "Niagara Leadership Community" where clergy and lay leaders can share ideas and resources, and initial planning for a diocesan leadership conference in 2017. You can reach Steve at leadership@niagaraanglican.ca.

Prophetic Social Justice Making

The first-of-its-kind international Justice Camp created an opportunity for 50 participants to live more deeply into our ongoing ministry relationship with the Diocese of Cuba, while at the same time explore God's work of justice-making through a unique cross-cultural experience.

People, parishes and community groups have responded in all sorts of incredible and unexpected ways to the global refugee crisis and our 140th anniversary initiative. Since the beginning of this year, groups have sponsored over 110 refugees – more than the diocese has in the past decade combined; and already 78 people have been welcomed into the communities we serve.

Bishop Michael's bold and pastoral response to ensure members of the LGBTQ2 community have equal access to the sacrament of marriage has not only sought to

uphold the dignity of every human being but has served as a prophetic witness to the Church about God's radical inclusion.

Archdeacon Val Kerr's appointment was a powerful statement of our commitment to truth and reconciliation in the Diocese of Niagara and already her ministry is bringing people together for teaching, building relationships, and fostering healing and reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

The story continues...

If you have a good news story that we haven't heard, please share it with Terry DeForest, Vision Advocate, so the Bishop and diocesan staff can carry your story around the diocese. Hearing about the ways in which God works through us to transform our various corners of creation inspires and encourages all of God's disciples!

Stories solicited and gratefully submitted by
The Rev'd Canon Terry DeForest, Vision Advocate and Director of Human Resources