

## MISSION ACTION PLAN REPORT

The Mission Action Plan was approved by Synod Council in January 2020 integrating feedback from the diocesan synod in November 2019. The key elements are:

Vision: **Called to Life – Compelled to Love**  
Mission Statement: **Ignited by the irresistible love of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, we partner with God to deepen faith, share stories and care for God's world.**

In the past year, despite the limitations of COVID-19, much has been accomplished under our three priorities.

### **Create and implement opportunities to ignite and strengthen faith**

- Bishop began a five-week Lenten Study at Church of the Incarnation which was interrupted by the COVID-19 shutdown...to be continued!
- Following the resignation of the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Reverend Leslie Gerlofs was appointed the Revive Coordinator with a mandate to support existing Revive groups and help clergy initiate new Revive groups in their parishes and regions. While COVID-19 has slowed the spread of Revive groups, some of the early adopters continue to host Revive and three new parishes are adding Revive groups.
- In response to parish closures in March 2020, the diocese implemented a digital diocesan Sunday service that deepened people's connection to one another and to the diocese and bishop as well as strengthened people's faith in a time of national crisis.
- Supports were developed to help parishes offer their own digital worship and faith formation opportunities including resources, training and funding for equipment
- The diocese engaged a diocesan missionary, the Reverend Jeff Potter, whose mandate is to increase the capacity and passion for missional opportunities and within the Diocese of Niagara, to support and equip faith community planters and leaders, and to help reshape the culture and structures of the diocese to reflect a spiritually-renewed missional orientation. Jeff has begun by dialoguing with clergy around the diocese both individually and at clericus meetings as well as connecting with church planters and ecumenical church leaders outside of the Anglican tradition. In addition, he has taken on a communications role that allows him further scope to work with our diocesan team to articulate our missional outlook.
- A diocesan confirmation retreat is in the planning stages for Spring 2021 thanks to Sarah Bird, consultant in Children, Youth, Young Adult and Family Ministry, and Donna Ellis, Licensed Lay Worker and Director of Children and Youth Ministry at St. John's Ancaster.
- Youth Alpha led by Sarah Bird is beginning shortly for the first time in Niagara.
- A theological reflection and discernment process, the result of which was spiritual communion as we continued to fast from a physical communion through the lock down.
- In conversations about how to proceed with two cancelled 2020 gatherings; a Clergy/Licensed Lay Workers conference with Sarah Bessey augmented by an evening with Sarah for the whole diocese, and a training event with Mary Foster Parmer on the Invite Welcome Connect missional approach to being community.

### **Reimagine diocesan culture and adapt our structures to enable ministry**

- A working group is meeting regularly with the bishop to develop a strategic plan for the launch of the Niagara School for Missional Leadership including the search for an engaging name!
- The Secretary of Synod and Synod Council continue to work on governance changes that make us more nimble in response to our context; to wit, the temporary waiving of a Canon 4.6 regulation

while parishes are unable to gather in vestry, the consideration of a canon delineating the relationship between the Cathedral and the diocese, and guidelines on virtual vestry meetings.

- The Johnson Report continues to impact an evolving relationship between Christ's Church Cathedral and the Synod Office bringing clarity and transparency to the staff and parishioners especially during the parochial process and a search which brought us a new dean gifted with a collaborative, missional outlook humbly rooted in gospel living.
- Creation of the Transformational Budget Working Group whose one-year mandate is to reshape the budget to align with the Mission Action Plan.
- In response to the COVID-19 lockdown, we created a diocesan Parish Support Plan designed to alleviate financial burdens on parishes in a shared initiative that included a suspension of DM&M invoicing, interest-free loans of up to \$10,000, interest waivers on past due accounts and/or historic debt for 2020, and a Parish Support Fund for parishes in severe hardship. This nimble response was followed by a diocesan commitment to apply for and disperse the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy for all parishes and Camp Canterbury Hills as well as the Synod office.
- The establishment of a diocesan Anti-Racism Working Group with a mandate to examine racism as it pervades our church and parish culture and to generate a strategic plan to redress these issues through a faith lens.

### **Prioritize social justice action with an emphasis on environmental justice**

- First diocesan Pride service (changed from an in-person event due to COVID-19) was a successful digital worship experience on zoom with Bishop Bell preaching and all the ancillary roles filled by people from the LGBTQ2+ community.
- The bishop sent a letter in support of basic income to members of parliament and joined with 40 ACC and ELCIC bishops in signing an open letter to the Prime Minister, Deputy prime minister and Minister of Finance calling for a Guaranteed Basic Income.
- Synod Council approved new terms of reference for the newly renamed Climate Justice Niagara (formerly the Greening Niagara Committee).
- The Greater St. Catharines Social Justice Team has developed a weekly online prayer practice aimed at social justice concerns that is sent to all those parishes weekly.
- The creation of a Pandemic Response Fund to support parish ministries oriented towards pandemic relief in their neighbourhoods. This initiative was generously funded from across the diocese, and supported more than a dozen parish ministries as well as PWRDF.
- Creation Care That Counts: a digital workshop with Dianne Saxe focused on faith leaders addressing our pollution contributions as a moral issue on October 4, 2020.
- Niagara in Action gathering with a focus on our Synod 2019 commitment to purge single use plastic by 2022 offered a session with Ashley Willis, Plastics Program Manager from Environmental Defence, and a session with the Reverend Canon Dr. Dawn Davis and her daughter, Johanna Harris demonstrating how they have eliminated single use plastic in their home.
- Postponed May 3<sup>rd</sup> Mapping the Ground We Stand On, a Truth & Reconciliation initiative.

The Spirit has clearly continued to flow through the diocese with a refreshing and compelling song. We are steeping ourselves in our tradition's faith stories, sharing our own experiences of the Good News in Jesus Christ in the midst of a pandemic, and taking bold steps as we co-create the kingdom hand-in-hand with God who calls us to life and compels us to love.

Respectfully submitted,  
Canon Christyn Perkons  
Director of Congregational Support & Development