

MISSION ACTION PLAN REPORT

Rooted in our diocesan vision — *Called to Life, Compelled to Love* — and inspired by the irresistible love of Jesus, the Mission Action Plan (MAP), updated in 2024, continues to guide our shared journey of faith, hope, and mission. Ignited by the Holy Spirit, we partner with God to deepen faith, join God's mission, and care for God's world. Our MAP is shaped by three interwoven priorities that ground everything we do as the Diocese of Niagara: Christ-Centered, Hope-Filled, and Missionally-Focused.

The report highlights the progress and impact of the MAP and its objectives during the past year, celebrating how God's Spirit is moving among us to ignite faith, strengthen missional culture, and advance social and environmental justice across our diocese.

1. Create and Implement Opportunities to Ignite and Strengthen Faith

Niagara School for Missional Leadership

Now in its fourth year, the Niagara School for Missional Leadership (NSML) continues to thrive at the heart of our diocesan formation efforts. The school has reached record enrollment with 108 students, including 73 from Niagara, and is attracting learners from across Canada and beyond. Through partnerships such as the Huron University Licentiate in Theology program, NSML is expanding access to theological education and strengthening discipleship throughout the Church.

Faith Formation Coordinator

In March 2025, the diocese welcomed the Reverend Monica Romig Green as our new faith formation coordinator, who also serves as priest associate at Christ's Church Cathedral. With her deep experience in Christian education and spiritual direction, she is revitalizing faith formation resources and supporting both clergy and lay leaders in nurturing discipleship across the diocese.

Commissioned Lay Missioner Program

The newly launched Commissioned Lay Missioner (CLM) program expresses our commitment to reaching beyond church walls. This emerging lay vocation equips and commissions gifted leaders from parishes and missions to build relationships and create fresh expressions of Christian community among those who are de-churched or unchurched. The first cohort of nine participants has begun training and mentoring, embodying the Gospel in their neighbourhoods and everyday life.

Diocesan Formation and Spiritual Renewal

For Lent 2025, Bishop Susan Bell invited the diocese to read *A New and Ancient Evangelism: Rediscovering the Ways God Calls and Sends* by the Reverend Canon Dr. Judith Paulsen. Participants explored how Bible stories of conversion may inspire approaches to evangelism and discipleship today.

As part of our 150th anniversary celebrations, the diocese produced a *Stations of the Resurrection (Via Lucis)* resource to invite joyful reflection on Christ's risen life. Bishop Susan Bell also led a retreat, *Meditations on the Christian Life: Faithful Living in a Time of Crisis*, offering clergy and lay leaders an online opportunity for spiritual deepening and renewal.

Ongoing Formation for Clergy and Licensed Lay Workers

Regular Clergy and Licensed Lay Worker Days continue to strengthen education, formation, and collegial connection. In 2025, participants reflected on engaging spiritual seekers (led by the Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby), creative use of church buildings for mission (led by the Venerable Bill Mous & Dr. Emily Hill), sacred art through Caravaggio's paintings (led by Archbishop Andy John, and *Courageous and Compassionate Conflict Conversations*, facilitated by Dr. Betty Pries.

Emerging St. Brigid's Community

Looking ahead, the groundwork is being laid for St. Brigid's Community, a new initiative launching in 2026 to offer 20–30 young adults a formational experience rooted in the Anglican way and shaped by the contemplative rhythms of life. This community will invite young adults to grow in faith, explore vocation, and live out discipleship through shared rhythms of worship and action for justice.

Children, Youth, and Family Ministries

Under the leadership of Sarah Bird, our Children, Youth, and Family Ministries (CYFM) program continues to flourish. Parishes are receiving renewed support in developing sustainable intergenerational formation. Highlights include the *Youth Leadership Training Program* during the March Break, a joyful *150th Anniversary Family Picnic* at Canterbury Hills, which brought families from across the diocese together, and the upcoming CYFM retreat with the Rev. Monica Romig Green, focusing on deepening faith, creativity, and community in ministry.

2. Strengthen the Missional Culture of the Diocese and Support Contextual Mission

Advancing the Mixed Ecology Model

We continue to foster a mixed ecology model—supporting both existing worshipping communities and emerging missional initiatives. Two cohorts of parish leaders, representing fifteen parishes in total, are now engaged in this work. Together, they are experimenting with new ways of connecting with their neighbours while deepening traditional worship and community life. This fall, the diocesan Mixed Ecology cohorts will welcome the Reverend Ed Olsworth-Peter, a leading voice in this growing movement, to offer inspiration, teaching, and practical tools for parish renewal.

Missional Innovation Grants

To encourage faithful experimentation and creativity, the new *Missional Innovation Grants* (which replace the former *Walking on Water* grants) invite parishes, missions, and chaplaincies to apply for funding to pilot or grow innovative projects that connect meaningfully with people beyond the church. These grants nurture local discernment and faithful risk-taking while supporting the diocese's vision of a church that is rooted in both tradition and innovation.

Thriving Diocesan Missions

Our active diocesan missions and missional initiatives—the Migrant Farm Workers Mission (Jordan and Beamsville), All Saints Mission and St. Luke's Mission (Hamilton), The Mission in Acts (Oakville), and The Well Mission (Hamilton)—continue to flourish. Each one now has a sustainability plan in place. Three have already been officially designated as diocesan missions under Canon 4.9, with another expected later this year. These ministries reflect our ongoing commitment to innovative, contextually rooted expressions of church life and faithful stewardship of resources.

Sharing Missional Stories

Diocesan communications are also evolving to tell our missional story more vividly. Through the *Niagara Anglican* newspaper, social media, and parish visits, we continue to highlight how God is at work in our local communities. This storytelling spirit was further celebrated through the *Missional Imagination Conference*—a collaborative effort of the dioceses of Niagara, Huron, Toronto, and Nova Scotia & PEI—which showcased examples of creativity, renewal, and Spirit-led mission across Canada.

Stewardship and Use of Assets

Stewardship support remains strong through the ongoing consultations of the Reverend Canon Dr. Drew MacDonald, who advises parishes on stewardship and planned giving.

Parishes are also exploring new and creative ways to use their buildings for mission and community partnerships. With diocesan support, parishes are discerning how their spaces can serve both ministry

and neighbourhood needs. In many cases, this includes forming partnerships and leasing portions of their buildings to community organizations—extending hospitality while also strengthening long-term financial sustainability.

3. Prioritize Social and Environmental Justice

Advocacy, Action, and Partnerships

The diocese continues to lead boldly in prayer, advocacy, and action for justice. The *Human Trafficking Forum* in October, featuring Jennifer Richardson, Canada's Chief Advisor on Human Trafficking, equipped participants to recognize and respond to trafficking in their communities and to take practical steps toward prevention and support.

Partnerships remain essential to the justice work of the diocese. Through collaboration with *KAIROS*, the *Canadian Council of Churches*, and *Alongside Hope*, the diocese continues to engage in collective advocacy for climate justice, truth and reconciliation, and peacemaking.

Our ongoing partnership with St. Matt's – celebrating fifty years of ministry – continues to bear fruit through the *412 Barton Street housing project*, creating homes for Indigenous and Black seniors, and the *Cathedral Café* which is a bold witness to our love of neighbour.

Environmental Justice

Climate Justice Niagara (CJN), supported by Deirdre Pike (Program Consultant, Justice and Outreach), has provided rich formation and practical tools through updated *Season of Creation* worship resources, an *Earth Day Webinar*, and ongoing support for tree inventories and plantings as part of the *Communion Forest* initiative. CJN also continues to play a leading role in the *Zero Emission Churches* project, helping congregations take meaningful steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Complementing this work, the *Niagara School for Missional Leadership (NSML)* offered a new course, *Following Jesus in a Time of Climate Breakdown*, led by theologian. The Reverend Jon Swales. This opportunity explores how faith and discipleship can inspire both advocacy and climate action.

Addressing Unjust Structures and Attending to Spiritual Needs

In 2025, the Diocese of Niagara completed regional anti-racism training for clergy and licensed lay workers—an important milestone in our pursuit of equity and inclusion. To extend this learning, an additional session in November will engage church staff, key volunteers, and any remaining clergy, ensuring that this vital formation reaches every level of diocesan leadership and ministry.

The *Rainbow Kings and Queens* community continues to flourish, gathering monthly at Christ's Church Cathedral, and online, with more than 300 LGBTQ asylum-seekers from eight African countries finding connection, care, and affirmation. The annual Fiercely Loved Pride Service again celebrated the sacred worth and belonging of 2S-LGBTQI+ people, offering a visible witness to God's inclusive love.

The Disability Theology Study Group, convened by Bishop Susan Bell and chaired by the Reverend Canon Dr. David Anderson, is deepening theological understanding of human diversity as God's gift and helping the diocese attend more fully to the spiritual and practical needs of neighbours with disabilities through study, reflection, and action toward accessibility.

It is exciting to see how the Diocese of Niagara is joining God's work in new and faithful ways. Through the structure and vision of MAP 2.0, we are charting our path forward and living more deeply into God's mission in the world. We have accomplished much together this past year. Thanks be to God!

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Emily Hill, Parish Development Missioner