

TURNING TO GRACE

OUR DIOCESAN PLAN



For Parishes

PREAMBLE

The following focusses on the ways that individual parishes can play their role in the implementation of the Diocesan Plan, *Turning to Grace*. It lists the individual Acts and Activities that occur at the parish level (with the numbering corresponding to that in the full plan). Parishes are encouraged to read this document alongside the *Summary* of the Plan.

The accountability for the implementation of the plan rests in the main with those individuals who are paid by parishes or the Diocese as a whole and therefore have the responsibility for ensuring that the aspirations of *Turning to Grace* are met. This means that at first glance, the plan can seem very clergy-focussed. As the *Word About Implementation and Responsibility* in the preamble to the plan emphasises, this is not intended to diminish the important role of lay leadership. Volunteer leadership in the parishes and indeed across the entire Diocese is how things get done.

The relatively few specific acts and actions that are at the parish level may be misleading from a parish perspective. A review of the full plan will show that the vast majority of the acts and actions—although they may be initiated at the deanery- or diocesan-level—will have a direct and positive impact on parishes. The basic principle of *Turning to Grace* as outlined in the section on Stewardship and Resources is that if the parish is strong, the Diocese is strong.

Parishes are encouraged to be aware of and attend deanery and diocesan events relating to the pillars and other specific initiatives in *Turning to Grace*.

PILLAR ONE

A LEARNING CHURCH FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Parishes are encouraged to continue and, if appropriate, increase the number of opportunities for small groups to gather together to develop and deepen faith as well as to learn specific things to support the implementation of *Turning to Grace* (e.g., the experiences of those new to our

communities, the facts with respect to homelessness or food scarcity in our areas, or how to develop a stewardship campaign in the parish).

There are many such activities already underway across the Diocese. *Turning to Grace* includes a list of only some of these:

- Lay-led bible and book studies in many parishes;
- Lambton Lay Institute and Essex Continuing Education Series
- Advent & Lenten Deanery Studies in London
- Saugeens: graphic novel book study
- Huron-Perth: Workshop on Evangelism
- Strong enrollment in courses and workshops led by Huron, Renison, and Canterbury as well as in the L.Th. program offered by Huron

ACTS AND ACTIVITIES – for Parishes		
1.	All parishes to implement at least one small-group learning opportunity annually, with the goal being to develop an ongoing pattern of having one other gathering in the week besides Sunday morning.	Fall 2024 plan and Lent 2025 start
	Who? Clergy and lay leaders	

PILLAR TWO

A MORE **JUST** CHURCH

The aspiration to become a more Just Church has three specific areas of emphasis:

- Reconciliation;
- Environment and Sustainability; and
- Poverty Reduction and Homelessness .

Parishes understand their particular context well. Walk your community, looking around with open eyes and prayer to see what needs are going unmet. Some needs are complex and require systematic approaches but many are smaller and simpler, easier for a parish to meet.

There are already many activities underway in parishes that relate in particular to climate change and sustainability (e.g., efforts to reduce the use of single-use plastic and non-recyclable items). These are to be encouraged and deepened. As well, *Turning to Grace* outlined a few of the many initiatives to address poverty and homeless in our communities:

- London Deanery support of InDwell;
- Migrant Farm Workers program in Brant-Norfolk, Oxford, and Essex;
- Connections Centres at St. Paul's Stratford, St. Paul's/Trinity, Wingham. and other locations;
- Many examples of community meal/community kitchen programs, many of which have operated for over two decades (e.g., Grace, Brantford; St. John's, London).

Parishes are encouraged to participate in deanery and diocesan opportunities and groups relating to environmental concerns and sustainability.

There are many ways that parishes can attend to the important work of reconciliation in all of its facets. Consider establishing a small group such as is envisioned in the Learning Church pillar to focus on a specific issue or area. Ensure that the parish is aware of and in compliance with Safe Church requirements through discussion at Parish Council or at a Vestry meeting. The one specific action for parishes in the area of Reconciliation relates to the development of safe-space agreements or covenants:

RECONCILIATION ACTS AND ACTIVITIES – for parishes		
2.	Encourage Parish and Deanery Councils to develop written agreements about how members will interact with one another (e.g., safe-space agreements or covenants). Assist this work by providing models or templates.	Fall 2024
	Who? Secretary-Treasurer & Director of Human Resources	

PILLAR THREE

A MORE **DIVERSE** CHURCH

Turning to Grace defines “diversity” broadly to include not only visible forms of diversity but also those forms that might be less visible: socio-economic, theological, liturgical, etc. Parishes are encouraged to consider the existing diversities in your community—you may be surprised at what you discover. This third pillar naturally suggests a connection with the first one. There are many ways to learn more about diversity and how best to increase and foster it.

There are already many activities underway across the Diocese related to becoming a more Diverse Church:

- Filipino congregations in Waterloo and London;
- Mar Thoma congregations in Windsor and London;
- Church of South India Congregation in London;
- Annual diocesan participation in Pride parades;
- Long standing ecumenical partnerships and activities, particularly in rural areas;
- Many examples of hospitality to surrounding neighbourhoods (e.g., picnics, Back to Church Sundays, Open Doors events).

ACTS AND ACTIVITIES – for parishes		
1.	Through small-group gatherings in parishes or Deaneries, re-examine our own learning about diversity that does not resonate with what we know about God. Extend these insights into conversations to encourage honesty about our own reluctances around issues of diversity.	Lent 2025

	Who? Clergy and Regional Deans	
--	--------------------------------	--

THE FOUNDATION: STEWARDSHIP & RESOURCES

While there are no specific Acts and Activities around stewardship and resources targeted at the parish level in *Turning to Grace*, in a real way, almost all of them have a parish focus or implication. The basic principle of the plan is that if the parish is strong the diocese is strong. Parishes are encouraged prayerfully to read and reflect on this section of the plan and, at Parish Council and Vestry meetings, to consider how to respond as a parish.

The Diocese of Huron is made up of the people, places, and properties at the parish level. We all, whether lay or ordained, have a sacred responsibility to be faithful stewards of the resources that we have inherited from previous generations of Anglican men and women. We are called not only to care for the existing resources of the parish (financial, property) but, if possible, also to secure additional resources through annual and legacy giving campaigns. The Diocese will provide support in establishing these.

Churchwardens and Parish Councils have a particular responsibility to attend to questions of stewardship by ensuring that plans are in place for regular maintenance and upkeep of the building and property and by implementing a realistic budget that clearly reflects the financial situation of the parish. Parishes are encouraged to involve the territorial archdeacon in these discussions as appropriate and an early stage and, at a minimum, to keep them regularly apprised of these matters.

We encourage all parishes and particularly those that are struggling in terms of financial or human resources to take charge of their future and to consider prayerfully what sort of legacy they wish to leave to those who will follow us in the Diocese of Huron.

ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORTING ON PROGRESS

There will be opportunity to report on how the parish is implementing *Turning to Grace* in the annual year-end documents. Parish Councils are encouraged to make the implementation of the plan in the parish a regular topic of conversation at Parish Council meetings.