

2022 North Fairfax Region Annual Report, Diocese of Virginia

North Fairfax Region Council membership has remained faithfully engaged throughout 2022 with meeting agendas that not only support the ongoing work of the council but were designed to foster discussions around further discernment of the Region's ministry going forward. The churches in the North Fairfax Region are Church of the Holy Comforter, Vienna; Church of the Holy Cross, Dunn Loring; Church of the Epiphany, Herndon; St. Anne's, Reston; St. Dunstan's, McLean; St. Francis', Great Falls; St. John's, McLean; St. Thomas', McLean; and St. Timothy's, Herndon. The Very Rev. Fran Gardner-Smith continues to serve as Dean for the Region.

March 2022 Meeting – thankfully, this proved to be our last “entirely virtual” meeting of the year. We dedicated a significant amount of time to conversation on our aspirations as a Region moving forward. We utilized the Diocesan provided “*A Regional Resource for Connection, Conversation, and Leadership*” (*Regional Resource*) to facilitate initial discussions that have ultimately served as the foundation for ongoing dialog and planning in subsequent meetings.

May 2022 Meeting – May was our first “hybrid” meeting with robust attendance both virtually and in person. Following another “Region Visioning Session” wherein we focused on our mandate as Christians to speak the truth (to ourselves and others), we were joined by Rev. Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr., Diocesan Missioner for Racial Justice and Healing. Rev. Hill discussed the importance of Christian formation/education and the critical part it plays in the racial justice and healing process and provided some initial observations on the work to be done within the Diocese in that regard. Council members actively engaged in follow-up conversation on our responsibilities for further education, fellowship and opportunities to promote racial healing within the Region and our respective parishes.

Recognition of the importance of youth and young adult ministries is an important Region priority. In keeping with that ongoing focus, the Council during the May meeting also discussed and approved a \$5,000 allocation of Region funds to further support *Arise Campus Ministry* lead by Rev. Drew Enz.

October 2022 Meeting – Following our adopted practice of engaging in opening discussions using the *Regional Resource* curriculum, the remainder of the meeting was spent in conversation and some decision making related to the following:

- Re-thinking how we work together in support of major initiatives that could benefit several congregations, but heretofore have primarily been supported by individual parishes
- Additional community outreach opportunities
- Revitalized support for the youth mission trip (*Moving Mountains*) and ongoing support of St. Timothy's Hispanic ministry
- Further consideration of regional worship opportunities
- Overall stewardship of Region financial assets and individual parish pledge support

While we fulfill our charge as a Region Council, the important work of supporting our Christian Mission continues to reside at the local parish level. Some examples of significant parish level ministries in the North Fairfax Region include the following:

- **Holy Comforter** – engaged 150 children along with 40 teenage “prefects” at their Hogwarts’s Vacation Bible School in learning about such topics as fruits of the spirit, the power of transformation through the Eucharist and loving the Lord all through the lens of the Harry Potter books
In late 2021, the parish began its sponsorship of two young families fleeing the catastrophic situation in Afghanistan. Parishioners, led by the church’s Afghan Ministry Team continue to assist the families with government paperwork, medical and dental appt’s, housing and children’s schooling, adult education needs, driving lessons/licenses and misc. legal matters, with the ultimate goal of guiding the families to financial and societal independence
- **Holy Cross** – the parish is responding to the war in Ukraine by running a series of “Pysanky” Workshop fundraisers. Participants are instructed in the art and symbolism of making Pysanky, the beautifully decorated Ukrainian Easter eggs. To date, Holy Cross has raised over \$6,000 for the Episcopal Relief & Development’s Ukraine Fund
- **St. Anne’s** – the church holds a monthly food distribution that serves 80+ families providing non-perishable goods as well as fresh produce, meat, and personal care items. St. Anne’s is also a sponsor of the *Cool Green Bags Program*, where community members provide bags of food for pick-up semi-monthly. Some of the produce is grown in the parish’s own on-site Good News Garden. The garden also provides a source of pollen for their “Bee Ministry” which produces 35 pounds of honey that is sold to provide additional funds for the church’s Food Ministry. As an LGBTQIA+ affirming community, St. Anne’s also provides sponsorship for *Reston Pride* each June at Lake Anne
- **St. John’s** – the parish continues to support several long-standing community support/outreach programs including Drive of the Month and Sandwich Sunday. Drive of the Month as its name implies collects needed items on a monthly basis for local social service groups. Items collected might be school supplies for needy students; clothing and toiletries for the church youth to take on their annual NYC mission trip; cellphones to help victims of abuse and Christmas stockings for the Salvation Army. Sandwich Sunday occurs on the fourth Sunday of each month when all hands, large and small are welcome to join in assembling over 700 sandwiches for Martha’s Table a food pantry based in D.C.
- **St. Thomas** – the parish’s pre-school, founded in 2021, continues to grow and thrive with 36 students currently enrolled. Operating hours from 7:00AM – 6:00PM serve to provide the greater McLean/Tysons area with a quality affordable childcare alternative. Beginning in September ’22, St. Thomas began a new monthly family service called Welcome Table. It includes worship and formation for all ages as well as a meal. The parish has also invested heavily in technology and stream to Zoom and YouTube (Zoom can be heard in the Sanctuary). St. Thomas furnished apartments for five newly arrived Afghan families in late Fall 2021 and early Winter 2022.
- **St. Timothy’s** – the parish planned and planted “Rooted in Herndon”, a Community Garden initiative. The Garden is a ministry of St. Timothy’s Community Engagement team, and features plot owners from both the church’s English and Spanish speaking congregations. Following a wonderful bilingual dedication service in the Spring, the parish has enjoyed the Garden’s produce and spiritual bounty throughout the past Summer into this Fall. St. Timothy’s continues its decade+ support of St. Matthieu’s School in Chapoteau, Haiti. This ministry supports the children of a school in Central Plateau region of Haiti, arguably one of the poorest areas of the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. This focus on education directly sponsor’s 24 primary school students supplying uniforms, tuition, backpacks and books and related support for teachers and school operation at a cost of \$500 per student per year.

Respectfully Submitted

Kevin Swanson, President, North Fairfax Region