



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

Anglican Church of Canada

TO THE CLERGY AND PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Dear friends:

We have been closely monitoring the rapidly evolving situation in Ontario related to the outbreak of the coronavirus, COVID-19.

While the Public Health Agency of Canada continues to assess the risk associated with this virus as low, as a faith community we must be particularly conscientious with our practices for the welfare of our communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.

Earlier this week, I have made the decision to suspend the sharing of the common cup at celebrations of the Eucharist, out of an abundance of caution, and in keeping with the Church's longstanding teaching is that it is sufficient to receive communion in one kind.

Now, with the encouragement of public health officials to increase our social distance as much as possible, the Anglican bishops of the province of Ontario have collectively made the decision to temporarily suspend all Sunday worship services, effective immediately and until further notice. Parish and community groups are encouraged to not meet in person during this time. Essential programs which support those who live in poverty, those who are food insecure and/or those precariously housed are asked to work with their local public health officials to put in place procedures that continue our loving service to those in need while mitigating risk as much as possible.

While the congregational worship of our Lord and Saviour is a foundational component of our faith, we feel that it is imperative we take this extraordinary measure, consistent with the measures of other institutions with our province, to slow the capacity of this coronavirus to be transmitted through our communities. Our new diocesan vision calls us to life and compels us to love, and this action is taken in this spirit, recognizing that in doing so we are protecting those who are most vulnerable amongst us.

For this Sunday, I invite you to participate in a live-streamed time of prayer, complete with a brief homily, beginning at 10AM through our diocesan Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/niagaraanglican/>). Additional prayer and liturgical resources will be available through our COVID-19 online resource hub (<https://niagaraanglican.ca/news/covid-19-resource-hub>).

As we continue to journey through the holy season of Lent, I would ask for your continued prayers for all who are ill with this coronavirus, for those who are caring for them, and for healthcare workers and researchers working to limit the virus spread. Please be assured of mine for you, now and always.

Sincerely,

Bishop of Niagara