



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

Anglican Church of Canada

April 1, 2020

*"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy
in every one of my prayers for all of you" - Philippians 1:3*

Dear Friends,

I begin this communication with the above words from St. Paul's letter to the Philippian Church very purposefully. If it's possible, I appreciate you all more every day. I have had the pleasure – and frankly, privilege – of connecting with many of you over this past week via Zoom and conference calls. I want to commend you all for the outstanding ways in which you are being the Church in this new and strange environment.

We are living a singular truth: that the Church has never been a building. Our buildings are beautiful, it's true. They have community importance for us. Our buildings are containers for ministry – and for the collective memories of our parishes. But if ever a time proved an important truth, it's now. The Church is a people bound by belief in God and by care and love for each other. Truly, we are proving Jesus' words in St. John's Gospel: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

You have found ways to reach out to one another that are rooted in that identity as disciples: in communicating through Facebook; in worshipping together online, and by upholding each other at set times of prayer; by caring for body as well as soul by grocery shopping and filling prescriptions for each other; by keeping loving company with each in our homes by phone calls; and most importantly, by being patient with the restrictions that we're experiencing on our movement in order to protect each other. That is all a solid foundation with which to move forward into a more intense time in the near future.

We have, in the last few days, experienced a particular increase in the number of cases of COVID-19 in several nursing homes around our diocese. I ask your prayers for the residents and caregivers in these places as they cope with the anxiety and fear that inevitably accompanies this news. The sad fact is, we can expect that the number of cases will rise over the coming weeks.

Please know that we are watching the situation closely and will do our best to communicate in real time with you and to keep our guidelines up to the minute. But not least, please also know that as you comfort and assure the people who are in your care, that we are praying and caring for you too.

Be gentle with yourselves in this time of increased tension and mental and emotional strain. There is a lot of uncertainty about. Take every precaution with regard to physical distancing and heightened hygiene. And don't hesitate to reach out to us in the synod office if we can be of any help.

This comes with my fervent prayers for your safety and my thanksgivings for your presence and ministry.

In Christ,

Bishop of Niagara

The Right Reverend Susan J. A. Bell
Cathedral Place, 252 James St. N., Hamilton, Ontario L8R 2L3 Tel: 905-527-1316
Email: bishop@niagaraanglican.ca Twitter: @BishopSBell