



The Office of the Metropolitan of Ontario The Anglican Church of Canada

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Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario

“A Word from One is a Word from All” Messages from the Ontario House of Bishops

March 20th, 2020

Dear friends,

In the past week, your inboxes, newspapers, and news feeds have been overloaded with information about the coronavirus, COVID-19, some of it deeply worrying. The Ontario House of Bishops want to end the week by offering you their personal words of hope and encouragement – Gospel words. Thank you for the extraordinary ways in which you are ‘being the church without being in the church’.

Bishop John Chapman – Diocese of Ottawa

I am delighted to say to all the people whom God loves, and I have said it already to the people of the diocese of Ottawa, the Church is not closed! Our Churches are more vibrant, alive, brash, responsive, and hopeful than ever. There is no detouring our Call. All the baptised are called to hope-filled and grace-filled service.

Bishop Michael Bird – Assisting Bishop Diocese of Ottawa

What I am seeing as we faithfully respond to this pandemic crisis is a profound movement of the Holy Spirit that has empowered and mobilized many clergy and lay leaders to initiate innovative and creative new ideas, allowing the work of the church to continue. This will, no doubt, prove to be a launching pad for a renewed and invigorated ministry that reaches out to and engages with the people of this generation in exciting new ways.

Bishop-elect Shane Parker – Diocese of Ottawa

During this pandemic we are obliged to be in the wilderness, without the normal comforts of place and plenty—away from temple and table. Our 2020 Lenten journey is providing us with a vivid experience of the 40 days and 40 nights Jesus spent in the hills and valleys of the Judean desert. So let us embrace this unexpected journey, and let it teach us: to be more thankful, more compassionate, more generous in works of love. While we may not gather in one place, we are one in grace.

Bishop Susan Bell – Diocese of Niagara

It’s so important for us to stay connected in the days to come - both pastorally and missionally. I am feeling deeply grateful to all our leaders for the creative and proactive ways in which they are reaching out to our neighbours. I hope that we’ll continue to call each other, be present to each other, and be Christ to each other in these extraordinary times.”

Bishop Andrew Asbil – Diocese of Toronto

It is tempting to wring our hands with worry or to let them drop to our sides in despair... as a people of faith, we simply don’t have that luxury. Instead we tap the hope that is in us, raise our hands in prayer, reach out to the most vulnerable, ring up neighbour and offer help and encouragement and we run the race that is set before us. With Jesus Christ as our strength and love we have nothing to fear.

Bishop Peter Fenty – Area Bishop of York – Simcoe (Toronto)

Our Lord encouraged his disciples when they were afraid and anxious not to be afraid. May we hear those words at this time of uncertainty and fear that we should not be afraid. Jesus' promise is faithful, "I am with you always".

Bishop Kevin Robertson – Area Bishop of York – Scarborough (Toronto)

"In the midst of this global pandemic, people of faith have become more creative about connecting in meaningful ways with others. Social media, emails, texts and phone calls have become Divine pathways for the light of the Gospel to be shared in these dark and difficult times. St. Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. In the midst of this current crisis, we are reminded of this amazing truth. Not even a terrible virus can stand in the way of sharing God's love. My prayer for our world is that this deeper human connection will continue to bind us together long after the COVID-19 virus has passed."

Bishop Riscylla Shaw – Area Bishop of Trent Durham (Toronto)

From the First Letter of John we know that God is Love and God is Light. Where there is love, where there is light, there too is God. From Leonard Cohen, cracks are where the light gets in! Have strength and courage, in this time of "cracking" -- when things are not as planned, as hoped, as anticipated... for God is there ahead of us, shining and loving.

Bishop Jenny Andison – Area Bishop of York – Credit Valley (Toronto)

I am enormously proud of the clergy and lay people of York-Credit Valley, who are responding with creativity and compassion to these extraordinary times. The experience that we are going through right now with Covid-19 more closely aligns us with the daily experience of millions of other Christians around the world, for whom, even in the midst of the 21st century, battling deadly disease remains a present concern. God will guide us to BE the church in ways that may be new, may not always be comfortable for us, but that will still bear fruit and glorify God.

Bishop Michael Oulton – Diocese of Ontario

I am reflecting on the words of the late Bishop Barbara Harris of New Hampshire, the first female bishop consecrated in the United States, who died last week at the age of 89. She is quoted as saying, "The problems in front of you are nothing compared to the God who stands behind you." In the midst of uncertain times, followers of Jesus Christ, lean into the truth of this statement and draw deeply from the well of Living Water that Christ provides to sustain us in the journey of life. May that hope continue to attend you all.

Bishop Todd Townshend – Diocese of Huron

Our church continues to do a good thing as we serve the world from a safe distance. Even if this has us cooped up in our homes more than we wish, we are learning ways to turn to God. This is good Lenten practice. Even more, in a crisis we remember to address God directly, to ask for and expect God's help. Our hope is driven by the fact that "we believe" and, as the Psalmist proclaims again this Sunday, that we "shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever".

Archbishop Fred Hiltz – Assisting Bishop of Moosonee

We recognize how difficult a time this is. There is a lot of anxiety. We feel it personally and publicly. There is considerable uncertainty with respect to how long the world will be on edge in the face of this pandemic. It is a time for us to stand together for the sake of the health of our common humanity. It is a time for us to pray without ceasing for all who are sick and those are terrified, those who are on the front line of caring for them, and for all officials entrusted with responsibilities for public health and safety. Know that in your praying we are united with you and trusting in the mercies of God.

