



# OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

Anglican Church of Canada

## The Feast of Pentecost

In the Year of our Lord 2020

### TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Dear Friends,

As the great feast of Pentecost – the giving of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, approaches this Sunday, I am mindful of the ways in which we are being powerfully led by the Spirit in our own time.

Pentecost is also called the birthday of the Church. It's earned that name because with the help of the Holy Spirit that gathered community of the followers of Jesus gained insight, direction and courage to follow the path that lay ahead of them. The Holy Spirit helped them become the Church – to have a common purpose and to hold each other in fellowship and prayer. It wasn't an easy path as they went out into all the world to preach the Gospel of the risen Christ – as we hear from St. Paul's as he described his missionary journeys: they were subjected to shipwreck, imprisonment, beatings, and all manner of difficulty. And the other disciples didn't have an easy time of it either. But, as we have been saying to each other for months now, they were all in it together.

This sense of being on a journey – on mission – with the Spirit as a guide is so very strong in the Acts of the Apostles and that is both a source of comfort and a source of inspiration for our own days. I feel that we are living in a time that is analogous to those early days of the Church; when what is in front of us is unknown but also exciting and full of possibility as we become something new. I feel that we are also refreshingly dependent upon the Spirit's leading in these times. That's a vulnerable place to be but it's also liberating – as long as it is God's voice we're seeking. It's a place for all faithful leaders to dwell in these challenging times.

So, as we listen for the Holy Spirit's urging and direction, please know that I am grateful to all of you for your leadership; for the ways in which you are listening, taking soundings and attempting to follow the Spirit in the risk of faith.

Like the Spirit which whispered over the waters of creation I am grateful for the ways in which you've listened to the Spirit's whisper as she recreates the church in our time. As the Spirit blows where it wills, I am grateful for the ways you've embraced the holy wind of change. And like the emboldening Spirit that hovered over the heads of the apostles at Pentecost, I am grateful for your courage as we face forward into our future.

One thing I am certain of, is that God will give us what we need – exactly what we need - in order to be equal to this next season of the Church's life.

And so we say with confidence and expectation, "Come, Holy Spirit, come."

Blessings to you and to those you lead this Pentecost and beyond,

Bishop of Niagara

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