



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

September 11, 2020

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. -Hebrews 12:1

Dear friends,

There are times when we are very aware that we do not walk alone. And this season we are passing through is one of them. As we've been doing our best to chart a course through this pandemic for the people we love and the church we cherish, I've been very aware of our history – and of the cloud of witnesses that have come before us who have experienced plague, famine, and war and yet found ways to remain faithful and committed to the Gospel and to its outworking in our communities of faith.

That knowledge has given me strength and confidence that we'll find our way through too. One thing I know is that this is God's church and God has this – and us – in an embrace of love. Dwelling in that eternal truth is the foundation for all that we do.

Having said that, we still have a race to run today. The quote above from St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews has been much on my mind lately as a result.

Over the next month or so – as of this Sunday – our parishes will be returning to in-person worship in circumstances that will feel rather different from what we have enjoyed in the past. And while we rejoice in being able to see each other, it is so very important that we do so safely.

The wearing of personal protective equipment, the hygiene protocols, and physical distancing are all crucial practices put in place so that we can protect each other. What is key is that we understand that we do these things for our neighbour and as such, we want to go further than we have to in order to love our neighbour. We want to protect the health of our siblings – particularly those who are vulnerable, so I ask that you not only fulfil the letter but the spirit of our ministry guidelines with a joyful compliance and diligence for the care of the whole Body of Christ.

Now, having said that, I also know how overwhelming this time is. As has been said many times, the pandemic still rages, and we are in the process of learning how to live with it. Nothing has materially changed with regard to its existence nor its inherent danger and the preparations we have to take in order to be together are also heavy. But that's when I take comfort and strength from Isaiah's words:

But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. -Isaiah 40:31

So, may God give you the energy, strength, and endurance you require as you prepare for re-opening. And please know that you are more than enough to meet this time.

Please also know that my prayers and those of all of us at the synod office are with you as you make your preparations. If there is any way that we can be of service, we are here to help as much as we can.

Blessings to you all.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Niagara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop of Niagara