



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

The Most Reverend Anne Germond
Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario

A Message for Holy Week

Holy Monday, April 6, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

I bring greetings to you this Holy Week on behalf of the House of Bishops in Ontario, as we remain isolated from each other in a ‘strange land’ and in this time of great concern as COVID-19 holds the whole world in its grip.

You are constantly in our thoughts and prayers and know this season of illness and isolation are affecting many of you, your relatives and friends. Like yourselves, we long for the time when we will be together again. We are inspired by the ways you are reaching out to each other and your creativity in connecting for worship, fellowship and meetings. We ask you to continue seeking the welfare of the cities in which we reside by doing everything that is asked of us by our government leaders and that we pray without ceasing for all who have been affected; for those who have died; and for those who are working on the frontlines in hospitals and in our communities. Pray especially for the poor, the homeless and those who find themselves without hope.

I would like to offer a passage of Scripture, appointed for Easter Sunday from the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter thirty-one.

2 Thus says the LORD:

The people who survived the sword
found grace in the wilderness;
when Israel sought for rest,

3 the LORD appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

4 Again I will build you, and you shall be built,
O virgin Israel!

Again you shall take your tambourines,
and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

The wilderness time of testing is always where God calls the people to be God’s people, and it is the place where God’s people find grace in the midst of every trial.

In the wilderness and uncertainty of COVID -19, we are all experiencing moments of grace – opportunities at home for more prayer and reflection, quality time with our loved ones including meals together, inner strength and gifts we never knew we had; meaningful conversations with parishioners whom we have not spoken to in a long time; overcoming fears of online communication platforms like Zoom, and livestreaming; the joy of discovering new ways of being church outside our buildings. We are witnessing the emergence of new leaders in our parishes as God calls them and us forward.

As we find grace in the wilderness God’s promise is that our communities and congregations will be built again, and we shall also be built. The gospel word and promise for us is ‘Again’....again we will be reunited with our loved ones, again we will worship together and meet for fellowship, again we will break bread, Again our children and young people will go to school and university, again our economy will be restored, again, again again....what is your again?

The Easter God announces to us, even in the wilderness “I have loved you with an everlasting love; and will continue my faithfulness to you.” Therefore, we can sing our hallelujahs (however badly that may be without the help of our neighbours in the next pew) even though it feels like there is very little to sing about. We sing because we know that death does not have the final word and where despair will not win. Like Jeremiah we look at the ruin around us and declare with confidence “Christ is Risen” because the God who raised Jesus from the dead loves us with an everlasting love and is always with us.

This Easter Sunday morning, I invite you make this joyful, hopeful announcement wherever you are by ringing bells at 9 o’clock. Home bells, church bells. Let us make a joyful noise! Let us change our church signs that indicate closure and suspension of worship to words of gratitude for all essential workers – from hospitals to grocery stores and garbage collectors and offer ways communities can join in online worship or find resources.

May the God of Peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Yours in the love and peace of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, starting with a cross symbol and the name 'Shane'.

Metropolitan and Archbishop of Algoma and Moosonee

On behalf of the Bishops of the Province of Ontario...

The Right Reverend Dr. John Chapman, The Right Reverend Michael Oulton, The Right Reverend Susan Bell, The Right Reverend Andrew Asbil, The Right Reverend Dr. Todd Townshend, The Right Reverend Peter Fenty, The Right Reverend Jenny Andison, The Right Reverend Riscylla Shaw, The Right Reverend Kevin Robertson, The Right Reverend Michael Bird, The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, and The Very Reverend Shane Parker.