



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

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

“Jesus Wept” – John 11:35

A letter from the Ontario House of Bishops to the faithful in Christ
on the First Anniversary of the Global Coronavirus Pandemic Declaration

March 2, 2021

Dear people of God in Ontario:

Grace and peace to you in Jesus Christ. We pray that in this time of ongoing uncertainty Lent remains a time of drawing nearer to God through prayer, penitence, and generosity.

In a year of many firsts for our generation, we are approaching the first anniversary of the declaration of the pandemic by World Health Organization on March 11th. Only two days later this was followed by an announcement from the bishops that church buildings would be lockdown and in-person worship would be suspended as of March 15th.

The scripture verse that we have chosen to mark these anniversaries in our common journey is Jesus’s arrival at the grave of his friend Lazarus - John 11.35, “Jesus wept.”

We invite you to join us in marking the year that has passed by observing March 11th as a day of fasting and prayer. We invite you to ‘stand together’ with us and observe 3 minutes of silence at 11:35 am on that day as we call to mind the loss, the pain, the grief, the resilience, the compassion, and the extraordinary sacrifices that have been hallmarks of the past year. A liturgy will soon be shared on the ecclesiastical province’s website for use in marking this moment. Alternatively, or additionally, parishes may choose to commemorate this occasion as part of their Sunday worship services on March 14th or at another appropriate time.

Witnessing Jesus weeping for the loss of his friend is a profound testimony to the truth of the Incarnation, of God-with-us. Our shared experience over the last year has been that in the midst of the darkness, uncertainty and fear, we were not alone. We have experienced God’s presence in new and meaningful ways and have witnessed the resiliency of God’s people which has brought out the very best in us. We are deeply grateful for the way in which you responded to the directives given early in the pandemic, and for all the ways in which you have sought the welfare of the cities and communities in which you live.

With the arrival and delivery of more and more vaccines we look with hope to a new normal in our lives. Resurrection and life are central to our lives as Christians; the meaning we make for our lives which also form our sense of Christian vocation.

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As we move towards brighter horizons, the story of Jesus' Resurrection beckons us with an urgent call to look around and notice the persons and communities who remain bound by the graveclothes of this pandemic through unemployment, poverty, abusive relationships, addiction, grief, and the long-term effects of COVID-19.

Though Jesus was the One to call Lazarus from the tomb, he called on those standing near to 'unbind him and let him go' (John 11:44). As people of the Resurrection this is our vocation now, to become caring communities and walk alongside those who are brokenhearted until they are able to walk in dignity again.

May we take up this sacred calling with the same creativity and faithfulness that has been so wonderfully displayed time and again over the last year.

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 Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario

The Right Reverend Andrew Asbil, The Right Reverend Susan Bell, The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, The Right Reverend Michael Oulton, The Right Reverend Shane Parker, The Right Reverend Kevin Robertson, The Right Reverend Riscylla Shaw, and The Right Reverend Dr. Todd Townshend.