



DIocese OF KOOTENAY
The Anglican Church of Canada

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The Rt. Rev. Lynne E. McNaughton, *Bishop*

Suspension of Public Worship and All Public Gatherings

March 18, 2020

Dear People of the Diocese of Kootenay,

Because the Ministries of Health in both province and country have asked us to “flatten the curve” and reduce and slow down the spread of the COVID-19 virus by staying home as much as possible, I am suspending all public worship and all gatherings in our buildings across the Diocese of Kootenay. I think this is the responsible, kind, and faithful thing to do at this point. Even in our smallest worshipping communities, small buildings do not allow the two meter distance between people that would ensure the virus is not spread. The Prime Minister has asked us to stay home!

Cancelling public worship and gatherings is a temporary measure. I will meet regularly with Archdeacons and Regional Deans (on Zoom, of course), and in six weeks, at the end of April, we will reassess the need for this moratorium, but we will continue to abide by the Ministry of Health directives. I will communicate regularly with clergy and with the diocese as the situation unfolds. It is indeed sad that the timing of this directive is so close to Holy Week and Easter, the heart of our liturgical year and the celebration of God’s self-giving love in death and resurrection. We are working on ways to join together in worship online during Holy Week and Easter.

This closure includes all classes, meetings, rentals, and outreach in our buildings, as we cannot be responsible for the virus spreading if a group fails to keep appropriate standards of cleaning and physical distancing. Meetings and activities are not worth the risk. If any of your rentals include essential services (daycares or food banks) wardens must communicate with me for proper procedure in this case.

Clergy must call me regarding arrangements for already-planned weddings and any funerals, so we can take measures to safeguard health.

There are several possibilities regarding ongoing prayer and worship. Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Jesus didn’t envision disciples gathering by phone or internet, but it is nonetheless true that the presence of Christ will be amongst us even in the midst of physical social distancing. The Holy Spirit can bridge our distances and isolation! We will need to use our imaginations and creativity to continue to

worship God in a new setting. The attached page has many possibilities; please email this list out to everyone on your parish list. When you discover or create a new way to worship, please let us know so we can both encourage each other and continue to update and publish the possibilities for prayer and worship together. Beginning tomorrow evening (March 19) we will offer “Late night prayer” (Compline) every evening at 9:30 via “Facebook–live.” We will send out the link tomorrow.

Please continue to give generously to your congregation, as your clergy will be continuing to serve you and the community and the regular bills will continue. If you are not already set up on Pre-Authorized Giving (PAG), please send post-dated checks to your parish.

Many parishes have already organized a phone tree to keep in contact with each other so no one feels isolated. If you have not done this, please do so as quickly as possible. Is there a homebound person who would take on a ministry of writing cards to people in your parish in care homes?

The Diocesan Centre will be closed for visitors, but all of us are still working either in the office or from home, and available by phone or email. I continue to do appointments via ZOOM.

The uncertainty and the real threat of the virus itself are producing fear and anxiety. Please support and encourage one another as we adapt to these circumstances. I encourage you to re-read and pray Paul’s confident assertion at the end of Romans Chapter 8: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Dear People of Kootenay, I am very grateful for each of you as you do your best to calmly, creatively and prayerfully cope with all of the daily adjustments to this unfolding situation. We all lean into trust in God, who abounds in steadfast love.

On the resource page is a prayer I have composed for the Diocese during this time, and I invite you to join me in praying it daily.

May God surround you with strength, courage and peace.

Yours in Christ,

+Lynne McNaughton

The Bishop's prayer for the Diocese of Kootenay:

*Holy and Compassionate God,
You accompany us in the wilderness.
You are present with us in this crisis time in our lives and in the world.
We pray for the people of the Diocese of Kootenay,
For clergy, leaders, parishes, and people.
Strengthen our community.
May your Holy Spirit connect us even in our distance.
May we know you abide with us:
Be our Calm as we face uncertainty and readjust plans and routines.
Be our Rock in rapid change; give us resilience.
Be our Shelter in the whirlwind; hide us under the safety of your loving wings.
Be our Peace; free us from fear.
Be our Strength; replenish us with courage.
Be our Compassion; enliven us to serve those in need.
Into your hands we commend our spirits,
In the name of Jesus, our Healer and Redeemer.
Amen.*

Resources

See Provincial webpage <https://www.provbcyanglican.ca/covid19>
or go to www.provbcyanglican.ca and click on **Coronavirus Update**

Loving God

*In this time of anxiety and chaos
As illness spreads through our land
And we are told to maintain our social distance
We turn to you.
Be close to us God
And close to those we love
Free us from fear and grant us your peace.
Help us to act appropriately
And always with love
Help us to see those in more need than we are.
We trust ourselves into your hands
In Jesus name. Amen. (Neil Elliot)*

Scripture for meditation:

- Joshua 1:9
- Psalm 23, 27, 63
- Isaiah 41: 4-10
- John 14:27
- Romans 8: 38-39
- Philippians 4:6-7