



The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Bishop's Directive March 25, 2020

Our Story

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 2.43-47

I have chosen to reflect upon the Pentecost event as a reminder of what is happening in this time and place. What do we do when the temple/church building is no longer the place where we may safely worship God? The author of Acts wants us to know that life for the worshipper has been changed. The disciples moved from waiting in faith, to speaking dynamically in many tongues, and Word of God moved from house to house.

We actually resemble that Church right now. The dynamism of the Body is found in the homes of Christians, praying in the faith and ministering in the strength of the Body. This collection of house churches requires attention from leaders, administrators and musicians, to continually build the faith that is in us all.

The Church in all places is one of the best equipped institutions to deal with on the ground connections, concerns and needs of the wider community. In some instances, we may be the only eyes and ears that Health and Civic authorities have on the ground. Your Clergy and lay leadership are vital in the endeavour to flatten the curve of COVID 19.

- **People of God, you have been trained, precisely for this time.** You are the dynamic expression of the Church as you are at this very moment, in your home. You are the gathered Church. Call fellow disciples, or connect on-line, and pray the morning and evening offices together. In all things pray for God's world, those who fear, those who are ill, those who risk themselves to bring healing and comfort to others, pray for food producers, leaders, and especially your local health practitioners and emergency responders. Pray also for the folk who manage your local municipal utilities. Pray for the strength of the Body of Christ, the Church as it engages food ministry and other vital ministries which sustain human life. Offer to God your thanks and praise for all the blessings of this life.

The Church, in all of our homes, is one of the best equipped institutions to deal with on the ground connections, concerns and needs of the wider community. In some instances, we may be the only eyes and ears that Health and Civic authorities have on the ground. Your clergy and lay leadership are vital in the endeavour to flatten the curve of COVID- 19. Your eyes and ears in the neighbourhood are equally vital as we all reach out to care for the most vulnerable in our midst, ensuring that they remain safe and healthy; even if you are self-isolating and/or over 60 you have a significant role to play in the Body, communicating known needs in the neighbourhood to your clerics and lay leaders, health and civic authorities for action. You are the active expression of the Church in Rupert's Land.

The Church we know and love, through prayer and fasting, is living a season of Lent that is transforming who we are and how we behave as the Body. A quick check on the Diocesan website will show you the vast resourcefulness of your Diocesan brothers and sisters. Please add to that list, sharing innovative and important stories of mission and ministry.

- **Clergy and lay leaders:** I re-enforce my past directive: to be in touch with our Church at home regularly by telephone calls and the many electronic means open to us, ensure that the resources for prayer, communication and activity for the dynamic quality of our Christian life are in each of our house churches. Your connections are most important for the health and well being of the Church. Pray and offer opportunity to hear other's prayers and thanksgivings. We are all experiencing some fear, some anxiety and uncertainty, as leaders we are called to walk with our people through these times, and offer sustaining comfort and hope.

Hospital visiting is prohibited, although Church may be called upon to offer Last Rites. Last Rites may be administered while strictly adhering to local health protocols.

Clergy and lay leaders will be called to offer home visits, especially to infirmed and vulnerable people in their homes. In these cases, the visitor must be 60 years of age or younger. Both the visitor and the home must share that there have been no symptoms of COVID-19 in either for 14 days. The visit shall be brief, minutes if at all possible, and concluded using strict public health protocols.

- **Gratitude and Generosity** are our responses to God for all of life, all of our time and all of God's gracious gifts. Our work in ministry and mission has increased daily since we have been impacted by COVID-19, and we have offered our services to ensure health in our neighbourhood. Parish administration staff, vergers (care-takers) and musicians all are playing roles in managing our vital work in ministry and mission. These disciples also depend on us for their livelihood as much as we depend upon them to facilitate our work. Lay leaders and clergy have committed more time and new effort to meet the various increased needs of the Church in this extraordinary time.

As it was with the first Christians, so it remains with us to offer God's gifts so that no one lacks. We must continue to offer God's gifts to sustain the health and wellness of the Church, recognizing that where some of our number have experienced a loss of income and have reduced their gifts to the Church, many of us have the capacity to exercise gratitude by increasing our offering. God calls the best from the Body; a Body that is called to give the best to the world. We faithfully trust with all our hearts, that God has this, and is using us to accomplish such deep sustaining care for others and the earth.

Please send offering envelopes through Canada Post, or call the parish and arrange for pick-up. Perhaps you can arrange with parish administrations to be enrolled in Pre Authorized Remittance (PAR) for regular monthly debit offerings? E-transfers are also an option for some. You will find a Canada Helps Donate button on the Diocesan website. Please consider donating as the demands upon this office have increased.

- **Palm Sunday and Holy Week**, will be an interesting adventure for us all. We cannot gather to process and worship, so we will be creative in our observance of this most Holy time. This could possibly be the year we break all past records for Holy Week attendance as we consider resourcing and live streaming through the week. Let us continue to adhere to all public health protocols.

Palm Sunday ideas:

A virtual procession: Have your people (children included) send to you a picture from a mobile phone, perhaps looking through palms or other foliage to the world around them. Then format the pictures to share on the day in a live-stream or YouTube presentation. Perhaps, you could share

that with the diocese as well. On the day, live-stream or send out questions that question and discuss the road upon which we are travelling. Who are the various characters? How does it feel being the Body of Christ at this time? How is God calling us forward? What is the Good News for all to share?

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday ideas:

Live-Stream or YouTube, on **Monday** dwell on the first 5 Stations of the Cross; on **Tuesday** the next 5; and the last 4 on **Wednesday**. Offer silence to reflect upon each station. Offer prayer at each station, and conclude with the Lord's Prayer. Or, send reflective materials each day for use at home in personal reflection.

Maundy Thursday ideas:

Live-stream, YouTube and send home:

Perhaps schedule a time for all to eat supper at the same time – read Exodus 12.1-14

With a bowl and pitcher visible, talk and pray about the intimacy of Jesus, and our call to gently care for one another today.

Have a discussion about Luke 22.39-46 “take this cup away from me”

Strip the Altar

Good Friday ideas:

Live-stream, YouTube or at home:

Read out loud the Passion of our Lord

Pray the reproaches/anthem

Sit in silence

Pray

No one really knows when this pandemic will stop impacting our lives, but when it does, **I think each and every one of us will rise in thanksgiving and celebrate Easter** with such robust vigor that doors and windows will shake, goosebumps will rise, and our once silenced voices will be raised in Church buildings, homes and street corners. It is the risen Lord who guides and scripts us now, not the pandemic; it is the risen Lord in the presence of the Body of Christ that is sustaining and empowering us for ministry and mission in the many and various ways we each can contribute now. It is the risen Lord who is calling us to that glorious day when together we shall sing at the top of our lungs, hear again the message that propels us through the seasons.

Children of God, it is my will and sincere desire, to do all in my power to support and nurture you in your life in Christ. You are constantly in my prayers, and always upon my heart. I believe that God is calling through this extraordinary time to renew the Church in strength, spirit and love; we will be a different Body after this; and we will sing Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Almighty God, we are taught by your word that all our doings without love are worth nothing. Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtue; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

God, bless and keep us. May your face shine upon us, and be gracious to us; may you lift up your countenance upon us, and grant us peace. Amen.



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