



The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Bishop's Directive March 15, 2020 Building and Changing Protocols in Uncertain Times

To The Diocese of Rupert's Land Lay leaders and Clergy

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. May the following directive and expectations equip you for the journey ahead.

O Lord our creator, by your holy prophet you taught your ancient people to seek the welfare of the cities in which they lived. We commend our neighbourhood to your care, that it might be kept free from social strife and decay. Give us strength of purpose and concern for others, that we may create here a community of justice and peace where your will may be done; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- **Health and Wellness of the Body** – My first priority in this communication is to ensure your complete health, and that of the communities you represent.
 - If you are a bishop, priest, deacon or lay leader over 60, and/or have pre-existing medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, heart disease), DO NOT put yourself in harm's way. Ask for assistance, advice and care.
 - If you are feeling unwell, make every effort to seek wellness, and should you exhibit any of the symptoms of the virus, immediately call authorities for testing and treatment.
 - Presently younger healthy people are not at serious risk (but like everyone should practice careful social distancing). This matters. As leaders we must actively exhibit and promote calmness and reason, by assuring that social distancing/separation is proactive and healthy, and does not lead to isolation.
 - I discourage all leaders, and in turn the diocesan membership, from participating in all activities that put you at risk.

- 1. **God Calls us to Active Ministry** – Although we have suspended public worship and gathering, we remain active in ministry (*working*).
 - a) When possible, do work remotely from home, or as office teams with limited access to one another. May this be for leaders a time of development, advance preparedness and hope.

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- b) We must afford extra care for Office Administrators, Receptionists and Secretaries, so that they may have a safe work environment. As much as possible, use telephone, text and email to communicate with these ministries.
- c) Use zoom, FaceTime, teleconferencing or other technology to keep current with meetings, management and the like. If you struggle with these platforms, ask for help, and soon.
- d) Designate a verger, or other, to make regular daily checks on the physical plant to ensure safety and security – clean out the fridge, regulate heat as warmer weather arrives.
- e) Pastor visitation is to be continued by telephone, FaceTime and the like. The only exception is the provision for last rites. At the discretion of each clergy person, with full adherence to Public Health Protocol, last rites may be administered.
- f) Develop a communication strategy for your particular community, phone committee, daily email messages of hope, blessing and Christian awareness. Ensure that any who are vulnerable have regular contact.
- g) Let us follow the lead of Public Health Protocols in delivering social ministry, like food ministry. While we most certainly will not be hosting meals, we could possibly be delivering gifts to food banks that have little to no human contact.
- h) Encourage all membership of the Body to be engaged through social media, telephone and email within their neighbourhood and family. May we each exercise a ministry of presence in the places we are sent, now more than ever in our lifetime, that ministry may be life-saving.

2. Worship and Prayer Practice

- a) I expect that Lay Leaders and Clergy will instruct all members of the Body to pray daily, the use of the online Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Alternative Services found at the Anglican Church of Canada's website, anglican.ca. Our spiritual practices join, heal, inform, strengthen and convey love in the Body of Christ. This is huge gift of God through the Spirit with which Jesus spoke in John's Gospel. There are indeed many forms of daily office prayer, each with its own benefit; using those with the Daily Online Lectionary (lectionary.anglican.ca) is a great way for us all to connect in the same spiritual space.
- b) A few communities are moving ahead with an online presence, specifically, live feeds at the regular time of weekly worship. I think this is excellent, healthy and hopeful. However, may this be accomplished with full attention to Public Health Protocols for your area, with only necessary people to work technology, and those to provide content – THIS IS NOT TO BE A PUBLIC GATHERING. ***The Diocese will provide one such weekly ceremony on Sunday mornings at 10am "live from Anglican Lutheran Centre." Details of platform and media requirements to be distributed to you soon.***

Here is an outline of the ALC ceremony: BAS pg. 185 with readings for Lent 4

Trisagion

Eph 5:8–14

Ps 23

Gospel John 9:1–41

Homily

Creed/Shema

Prayers

NO BREAD AND WINE

Commune: Psalm 126 as prescribed to the Diocese for Lenten prayer practice

“All your works praise you....” BAS 214–215

Song

Blessing

Dismissal

For assistance with podcast and live streaming technology please email the Rev'd Jamie Howison: jamie@stbenedictstable.ca

c) **Funerals** – I want you to go one of three routes.

- If there are ashes, please ask for a safer time to conduct the worship
- If there is a Body, gather as only immediate family and priest, observing all Public Health Protocols, with no reception.
- Determine if a funeral home ceremony would be safer, again with only immediate family and priest
- ****note**** this may be much more difficult to enforce and administer in Indigenous communities of the diocese. Bishop Beardy, of the Northern Spiritual Area is presently working on language and protocols for this.

3. **Communication Regarding COVID-19** – All of your communication regarding COVID -19, whether by social media, email or word of mouth is the diocesan script, that is, the official directives and communiques which I have sent to you. This pandemic changes hourly, and our job is to lessen the presence of confusion and fear. If you are unsure about a social media post, don't re-post it. I am doing my best to get information to you clearly and timely. Please be patient and helpful.

4. **Use of Time** – Perhaps a useful way at looking at our situation is that we have been awarded an extraordinary time, space and spirit of generosity. We have a minimum of three weeks to think out loud, adjust planning schedules, read articles, journals and books, write, pray and dream. I strongly encourage you to speak electronically as a

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deanery and/or in other groups weekly, or more frequently. The purpose is to keep us connected, to help us continue to grow as individuals and, most importantly, to heed

5. God's call to ministry, mission and evangelism. Strengthen one another, build up the Body of Christ and let your light shine. Please know in your head, and feel it in your spirit, that I am praying for you by name daily.
6. **Social Distancing/Separation** – This is a tried and successfully proven mechanism for combating infectious disease. During the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918 in the U.S., mayors and councils who employed Social Separation saved their constituents from death and suffering. Where Social Separation was not employed, much death, much suffering almost caused devastation for cities. Our stance is pre-emptive, and I have written the Mayor of Winnipeg, and with help, the mayors, chiefs and reeves across the diocese, to encourage and support our municipal judicatories to act pre-emptively. This is an act of deep care conveyed through leadership, thus the many directives before this bullet.
7. **Opportunity to Exercise Leadership** – I have been in consultation with Bishops, Municipal Leaders and Medical Practitioners across the country. Many of these folk have expressed a desire to petition the levels of Canadian Government to implement Guaranteed Basic Income immediately for all Canadians. There is a lot of very complicated information and data for this cause, so I will leave you with two pieces. First, a healthy populous will always be better equipped to deal immediately with situations like the one in which we now find ourselves; and secondly, research by Dr. Jim Dunn at McMaster University, Hamilton. His work is sound. I intend to follow this conversation and possible leadership direction. I understand God is pointing us toward this, especially as I reflect upon Ezra and Nehemiah who worked tirelessly to build healthy community and a healthy city.

We live here and now, we are called here and now, there is no other place like here and now. God's call(s) to us is ever present, and yet I realize that many fear and are disturbed by our present situation. Some are called to hunker down, to pray and to be spiritually supportive and present to the Body. Others are called to walk into marketplace and the like, to have our robes touched by faith. Be true to yourself and your community. Know you are loved and supported. Keep the faith entrusted to you.

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.



+ Bishop Rupert

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