



# The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft  
Bishop of Rupert's Land

## Bishop's Directive - March 18, 2020

### What to Do and Be Now

*They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. Mark 14.32-33*

Since Friday March 12 the Diocese of Rupert's Land has maintained a crucial and strict stance to suspend public worship and gatherings, particularly in, but not limited to, Church spaces. Our stance has rapidly become the stance of many other social, educational and other agencies. The COVID-19 pandemic is real, and it is upon us. As of today the Manitoba Provincial Government has issued new protocols that limit the size of gatherings to 50 people, a drastic change from 250 people. I believe that the protocols will indeed become more stringent; I imagine that this number will be reduced to 10 or less people shortly.

The Church, in times of plagues, wars and other disasters, has made herself available as a hospital, a sanctuary, and a point of safe human contact. In short, the Church has done civil obedience in providing these essential services through crisis. With the advanced development of health sciences through the last 200 years, medical professionals, essential and emergency care givers are now the normal expression of what the Church has been developing for 2000 years. Following the government experts is our present duty and obligation.

**Offering space and praying for and with medical practitioners, essential and emergency services personnel** *(This is not to be confused with holding regular worship for the general public, nor your parishioners, unless they fall into one of these categories mentioned above).*

As mentioned in the March 16 Directive, Regional Health Authorities may ask our assistance and care, especially in areas and situations for which we show excellence. Health Care, emergency and essential workers are a prime concern for the Church, as they represent the fruition of our centuries of labour. I will be inviting some clergy (under 60 years of age, with no chronic, nor seasonal ailments), to consider hosting groups of 10 or less medical, essential and emergency workers to prayer and worship using **prescribed local and regional health authority protocols**. The invited cleric must be willing to host this group in a space that must be cleaned and sterilized before and after the event. The thought behind this is that Christian health care workers and emergency responders act naturally as chaplains in the environments within which they are called. By providing such care, the Church furthers the energy and wellness of the worker.

### Emergency or alternative uses of our buildings by Regional Health Authorities

We have been in conversation with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and other municipal Health Authorities with an offer to make some church halls ready for essential services such as, but not limited to, blood donation sites and meeting space for professional education and

development. These types of activities come with **protocols and mechanisms** for cleaning and sanitizing the spaces and surfaces before, during and after use. If so required, calls will come to this office and will be re-directed accordingly.

### **Sharing Creative and Imaginative ways to be the Body of Christ**

In a time like this, we need to develop and share creative and imaginative ways for us to be the Body of Christ in the world in which God is already at work. A "COVID-19" tab has been established on the diocesan website for the sharing of stories, ideas and initiatives to reach and share with diocesan membership and neighbourhoods, or for anyone who may be seeking ideas of how we can continue to be active as the Body in the world. All Bishop's Directives will be posted there as well, by date they were issued.

Some of our parishes have already advised us of initiatives being taken such as: live-streaming worship; weekly emails to parishioners; offering a time for Bible Study or prayer through Zoom or other platforms. One priest has suggested we may wish to consider, when the suspension has been lifted to observe the richness of Holy Week.

I will be **live-streaming worship on Sundays from Anglican Lutheran Centre at 10 am** <https://www.twitch.tv/rupertsland> and will, from time to time, post prayers to my Facebook page.

Please make submissions of your creative work in ministry and mission to Canon Suppes, (via email) who will ensure these are shared on our website.

### **Providing the necessary resources for ministry**

I expect, as we expect of one another, that we will not only continue in our regular offering patterns, but generously go further to help resource the very real impact of our ministry and mission during the COVID-19 Pandemic. As we are one in Christ, our strength, our mutual care, and our health will provide our local municipalities much of the needed help to not only flatten the curve, but to bring us safely to the other side.

- a) Where possible, increase your pre-authorized remittances (PAR)
- b) Where possible, send cheques directly to your church office
- c) Where possible, hit the "donate now" button from Canada Helps, or on your parish website or the Diocese of Rupert's Land website – [www.rupertsland.ca](http://www.rupertsland.ca)

Providing in this way, we assure, in some part, the health and well-being of the body of Christ, as it is propelled into the world in which God is already working.

### **Maintaining Food Ministry**

As mentioned before, for those who rely on food banks, living paycheck to paycheck, our food ministries are now more important than ever. We recommend all food bank providers consult with their local Regional Health Authority and/or food providers like Winnipeg Harvest (for those in the City of Winnipeg), to obtain the latest protocol, and then adapt these protocols creatively, imaginatively to enable this ministry to continue. A major thrust will be to enable this ministry for both providers' and patrons' safety. The Parish of St. George, Crescentwood has been encouraged to make donations by credit card to West Broadway Community Ministry.

### **Resourcing our disciples to care in our neighbourhoods**

I am encouraging on-going daily or weekly connections via phone, email, or social media (not in person) to enhance relationships and connectedness through prayers with the Body of Disciples. Offer care for seniors and vulnerable persons who remain shut-in due to age or infirmity. Provide daily and weekly prayer resources for individuals, or families to maintain their spiritual discipline.

**A message from our Primate:**

I encourage you to listen carefully to the Primate's message to the Church made possible through the giftedness of the Rev'd Jamie Howison and others at saint benedict's table.

<https://www.stbenedictstable.ca/blog/for-a-time-primate>

Perhaps, this is the best time to also begin a conversation about Easter, and what we might do. In the very real event that we remain encumbered with suspension of public worship and gathering over Easter, I have received a suggestion that I should consider making provision for our first Sunday back to fully embrace Easter Sunday.

Christ makes himself know upon a dusty road after the resurrection event. Those who witness this event not only celebrate Easter, but become that for other disciples by their witness. Each of us will witness, and with great thanksgiving God in our midst through these troubling times; let us prepare to tell the story, as if for the first time.

*God of our longing, rest upon our wearied souls and bodies; give us courage and grace to meet the mounting needs of your people. We ask this in the name of the risen Lord. 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.**



+ Geoffrey Rupert of Land