

Dear Friends

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the tremendous amount of work you have been putting into ministry over the past three months of continual adaptation in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic. We are not through this yet (it may be better to say that it is not through with us) however we seem to be at the end of the “first wave” in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Life is not back to the way it was before Covid 19 and will not be anytime soon. Your creativity in responding with worship, pastoral care, teaching and meeting in electronic ways has been absolutely wonderful. Thank You.

I want to touch on some decisions made at the Diocesan Council meeting held last weekend and further to plans to re-open church buildings to worship.

#### 1) Diocesan Administrators

Council appointed The Rev. Canon Gordon Redden, The Very Rev. Paul Smith and The Rev. Lori Ramsey as Administrators. They will begin their work on August 1st, 2020. Canon 3 describes the duties of the Administrators as:

- (a) presiding over all Synods, Boards and Committees of which the Bishop is chair;
- (b) maintain the discipline of the Church;
- (c) appointing and licensing clergy to parishes;
- (d) making a report respecting their official acts to the new Bishop of the Diocese;

In addition Council assigned these duties:

- Representing the diocese in other allied bodies as permitted by those organizations e.g. Mission to Seafarers, AST Founders, University of King’s College Board of Governors.
- Disbursing bursaries to theological students and from other funds with general episcopal oversight.
- Licensing Licensed Lay Ministers and Eucharistic ministers.
- Giving permission for weddings outside of the church buildings.
- Being a conduit for information to/from the Provincial and National House of Bishops.
- Arranging for Episcopal Sacramental Acts as needed. (Making decisions regarding ordination may need to be visited if an election does not take place in September)
- Providing Pastoral Care for Clergy.

Areas where the administrators will **not** be able to act:

- Approval of new liturgies
- Disposition of any funds where the bishop is a trustee
- Approval of sale of property, approval of mortgages and leases, contracts related to real property

Email for the Administrators may be addressed to [BishopsOffice@nspeidiocese.ca](mailto:BishopsOffice@nspeidiocese.ca)

#### 2) Electoral Synod

Council received a proposal from the Chancellor for a “Dispersed Electoral Synod” for September 12. Synod delegates would gather at a location in each region. The Metropolitan, synod officers, nominees, chief scrutineers and a tech team would be at All Saints Cathedral. The regional gatherings would be linked to the Cathedral by Video link so that delegates can see and hear what is happening in each location. In each regional gathering, the delegates would be “checked-in”, there would be a celebration of the Eucharist, and Voting would be by paper ballot, counted by scrutineers at each location, and then transmitted to the chief scrutineers. There will be no food provided.

The plan was provided to the General Synod and Provincial Synod chancellors and the Provincial House of Bishops, all of whom provided advice and supported the proposal. The plan requires that we be permitted to gather at least 50 people in one location in order to work. Three regions will require more than one site as they have more than 50 Synod delegates.

Council approved this plan.

Details and recruiting the necessary people will be coordinated by the Synod Arrangements Committee during the summer.

The Administrators will make the final decision of whether to proceed early in August.

Please continue to hold the nominees in your prayers.

### 3) Financial support to Parishes

The diocese has received the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) for March 15-May 9. It has provided a rebate of a little less than 75% of stipends. We will continue to apply for this subsidy if we qualify.

Council decided to continue to cover stipends at the 75% level in June. If necessary and we continue to qualify for this subsidy, this support to parishes will continue for July and August.

### 4) Mission Action Plan

Council received the first Draft of the Mission Action Plan. Council members were given a list of questions to reflect upon as they review the plan. There will be a dedicated meeting of the Council early in the fall to look at the details of the plan. The goal is that the plan will then be circulated in regions and parishes, amended based on feedback and be presented to Diocesan Synod in the spring of 2021.

5) The Rev. Will Ferrey began as Executive Secretary of Synod as of June 15. He will continue as rector of the Parish of Amherst. We give thanks for Canon Gordon Redden's ministry as the acting Executive Secretary of Synod.

6) I was a part of a video conference on Monday with heads of faith communities and Dr. Strang the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Nova Scotia. He indicated that he expects to make an announcement by the end of this week to allow larger gatherings, including churches. Last week Dr. Morrison, the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Prince Edward Island announced that as of June 26<sup>th</sup> groups of up to 50 people may gather in Prince Edward Island. I will be reviewing the conditions that need to be in place in parishes in order to begin to use church buildings for worship and will circulate them in tomorrow's Net News. Regardless of how many people are permitted to gather, the requirement that people maintain at least 6 feet distance from one another remains in effect and in most cases this will dictate how many people will actually be able to gather indoors.

Please send me your parish plan for reopening your building or if your parish has decided to wait, please let me know. As I have said before, no parish is required to re-open their building for worship at this time. I am reprinting the issues you need to consider when deciding to begin in person worship gatherings.

- We need to move slowly. In all decisions we need to hold uppermost the care for those most vulnerable to the virus.
- Just because we can, doesn't mean we have to. Parishes may choose to wait longer before beginning to gather in person for worship.
- As of June 26 groups of up to 50 people may gather for worship in Prince Edward Island. As of today's date we are restricted to gatherings of 10 people indoors in Nova Scotia and up to 15 for weddings and

funerals (plus an officiant) outdoors. These restrictions on numbers are expected to be increased by the end of this week. We do not know what the new regulations will be. It might be an increase in the number or it might be that we are allowed to use a percentage of our buildings rated capacity.

- Even when we are permitted to gather in greater numbers, Physical distancing between individuals/households will continue; 6 ft. in all directions - 36sq ft. per person (or household)
- Personal hygiene is the best defense against the virus: frequent hand washing or using hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol). Do not touch your face. Do not shake hands or hug. Parishes must provide adequate facilities to support these requirements.
- Church buildings or other places for worship will need to be cleaned before and after worship, especially high touch surfaces. If there is more than one worship service in the same building on the same day, the building will need to be sanitized between worship services.
- A list must be maintained of the names of those who are present for worship. It would be best for the "greeters" to record the names- do not have persons sharing pens to sign a list. The lists should be retained in the parish office in case contact tracing is required.
- Offering plates cannot be passed from hand to hand. They can be left in one place in order to receive offerings.
- No physical touch when "passing the peace" - use other means of greeting.
- There is some evidence that singing has the potential to spread the virus more than simply talking. Therefore, at this time there will be no congregational singing in worship. There may be a soloist or small vocal group to provide music. They must be at a greater physical distance from the congregation.
- When Eucharist is offered it will be in one kind, with only the presider receiving in both kinds.
- The presider will wash their hands before the Eucharistic prayer and again following the prayer, before distributing communion. The presider must wear a mask during the distribution of communion as they would not be able to maintain the required physical distancing at that time. In some buildings it may be better if the presider/Eucharistic minister takes the sacrament to people in their seats rather than have people proceed to the communion rail. In the latter circumstance people must maintain the physical distancing requirements.
- Some parishes have indicated that they are going to offer a "service of the Word" for their first few weeks back in their buildings, as a way of figuring out how the gatherings can take place in a safe manner before they celebrate Eucharist.
- There will be no "receiving lines" at the end of worship. No encouragement to linger to chat. There needs to be a plan for the orderly dismissing of the congregation.
- No sharing of food (pot-lucks, coffee hours, etc.)

## 7) Vacation

I have been asked by a couple of clergy about taking vacation. The short answer is - yes. It has been earned- more than earned with all of the new things we have had to learn and adapt over the past three months. I appreciate that everyone in leadership has been working extra hard to meet the needs of ministry while working under significant anxiety and in very different ways. It is important that we have a time for rest and re-creation, especially as it seems we will be in an ongoing situation of adaptation in the fall.

This Sunday is Father's Day, it is also the National Indigenous Day of Prayer

This is the Collect prepared for the Day of Prayer:

Creator God, from you every family in heaven and earth takes its name. You have rooted and grounded us in your covenant love, and empowered us by your Spirit to speak the truth in love, and to walk in your way towards justice and wholeness. Mercifully grant that your people, journeying together in partnership, may be strengthened and guided to help one another to grow into the full stature of Christ, who is our light and our life. Amen

Blessings,

+Ron