



ANGLICAN  
DIOCESE OF QUEBEC  
DIOCÈSE  
ANGLICAN DE QUÉBEC

**TO:** Clergy, wardens, lay readers, and lay pastoral visitors  
**FROM:** Bishop Bruce Myers  
**DATE:** Friday 20 March 2020  
**RE:** Church life during the COVID-19 pandemic

---

It has been exactly one week since all public liturgies and other church-related gatherings across the Diocese of Quebec were suspended, until further notice, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to thank all of you for how quickly and compliantly each of your communities responded to this directive, which is part of a wider collective effort for the common good and especially those most vulnerable to this disease.

It seems likely that some form of this disruption in our common lives as congregations and as a diocese will continue for some time to come, and so I'd like to offer some further guidance about how we journey together through this time of trial.

***All public liturgies and church gatherings remain suspended, including public funerals. Other temporary options are available.***

During this suspension of public worship, I am inviting the Anglicans of our diocese to join me in a different form of prayer on Sunday mornings: a webcast of prayers from my home in Quebec City starting at 10:30 a.m. EDT. Details on how to access these services are available on the Anglican Diocese of Quebec Facebook page and on the diocesan website ([www.quebec.anglican.ca](http://www.quebec.anglican.ca)), where you'll find other resources to help you pray at home. Please widely circulate this invitation to worship as a diocesan family in a new and different way. We are exploring ways to expand our fellowship options, including ways to reach people without internet access.

The suspension of public worship services also includes pastoral liturgies, such as funerals. Earlier this week, Quebec's director of public health specifically identified funerals as high-risk gatherings for transmitting the COVID-19 virus. Until this passes, clergy and lay readers are instructed to refrain from presiding at funerals in church buildings or funeral homes. Three other options are possible at this time: 1) If possible (for example, if the remains of the departed have been cremated), delay the funeral until the suspension of public liturgical services is lifted; 2) Conduct a form of the entire funeral liturgy at the graveside, with a small enough number of

people that respects public health authorities' most up-to-date instructions ([www.quebec.ca/coronavirus](http://www.quebec.ca/coronavirus)); or 3) Hold a small private gathering of family members and close friends at the home of the deceased, with prayers for the dead being offered by the family, followed immediately by the committal of the body in the cemetery led by a priest, deacon, or lay reader. When things return to normal, a fuller requiem or memorial service could be held at the church, at which the wider community could gather as usual.

I recognize that the death of a loved one is difficult enough without the additional complications created by this pandemic. However, these measures are in place so that we might avoid the exponential wave of deaths and funerals that we have witnessed in other parts of the world as a result of COVID-19.

Please be reminded that all other public church gatherings such as study groups, annual vestry meetings, and social events are also suspended until further notice. Concerts and other gatherings that involve outside groups using church property must also be put on hold.

***Because of the way COVID-19 spreads, great caution is required in providing pastoral care. Consider team approaches to staying in touch by phone or email, and collaborative ways to meet material needs.***

Among the many challenges posed by this pandemic is how to provide pastoral care to our members when many are in self-imposed quarantine or are in hospitals or long-term care facilities where visiting has been prohibited.

Congregations with up-to-date membership lists should use these as a way of checking in with people by telephone or email, while also exercising discretion in how widely individuals' private contact information is distributed. Clergy, lay readers, wardens, and lay pastoral visitors could, for example, divide up a congregational membership list and reach out to everyone relatively quickly.

Because so many different groups of people are now homebound because of COVID-19, it is worth asking the individuals you contact whether—in addition to spiritual or companionship needs—they have any essential material needs, such as food or toiletries. Consider whether your congregation can be mobilized to assist with these, or see if you can partner with other community organizations to help.

***Church House is closed, but we are answering incoming voicemails and emails. Please be patient with us as we cope with this unusual time.***

Church House, the administrative office of the diocese located in Quebec City, is effectively closed until further notice. Our small but diligent staff is working mostly from home, which means it may take longer than usual to respond to messages and enquiries. You may call 418 692 3858 and leave a message on voicemail or email general enquiries to [info@quebec.anglican.ca](mailto:info@quebec.anglican.ca). Someone will respond as soon as we are able. Thank you for your patience.

***Be attentive to your own physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.***

For many of us, respecting the directive to physically distance ourselves from others without overly isolating ourselves socially can be a challenge. Even as you reach out to others, I'd invite you to also be attentive to caring for yourself. This can be especially important for those of us who are in self-imposed isolation. Consider things like structuring your consumption of news, finding ways of remaining physically active, and eating and sleeping as well as you can. As leaders in our communities we are called to model good behaviour for the people we serve, and to stay as healthy as possible so that we might continue to serve.

These are unusual and unsettling times, but they are not unprecedented. A century ago our churches were closed for several weeks during the 1918 influenza pandemic, and we emerged intact on the other side of that. However, I would invite us to view this as not simply a crisis to endure or a challenging time to get through. Instead let it be an opportunity for us to renew our purpose as a church in this time and place. Let us be the attentive ears and helping hands of the body of Christ in our communities. In the face of darkness, fear, and death, we can be small but luminous beacons of resurrection and hope.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the name 'Bruce' in a cursive script.