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TO: Parish corporations and treasurers
FROM: Bishop Bruce Myers
DATE: Thursday 2 April 2020
RE: COVID-19 and congregational finances

Across Quebec we are preparing to enter our fourth week of self-isolation, and churches all across our diocese will be closed for a fourth consecutive Sunday.

These collective efforts have so far been successful in helping stifle the spread of COVID-19 and in saving lives. I am deeply grateful for the way that Quebec's Anglicans have answered the call to take the difficult but necessary measures required to combat this pandemic.

These measures have also had a significant and widespread economic impact, with many businesses temporarily closing and thousands of people being laid off, having their wages reduced or their livelihoods imperiled.

The church is not immune to the economic effects of the pandemic. For their financial health and sustainability, the congregations of our diocese depend primarily on two sources of revenue: the generous contributions of parishioners and income generated from investments. The financial landscape has changed, and I know that many of our congregations—some of which were already financially fragile—are concerned about the future.

Diocesan Treasurer Michael Boden, Director General Marie-Sol Gaudreau, and Vicar General Edward Simonton have been tirelessly monitoring and evaluating the financial impacts on our church since this pandemic began, and together we have been attempting to discern the best financial path forward for our church in an unprecedented situation that is changing almost daily.

Our goal is to do everything we can to keep our congregations—and the diocese as a whole—financially viable during this challenging time, and to safeguard the livelihoods of our clergy and lay employees who rely on a stipend or wages from our church. They have all been finding creative and meaningful ways to fulfill their vocations and serve the church in this extraordinary set of circumstances.

To that end, we are taking the following approaches concerning finances:

- 1. DIOCESAN POOLED FUNDS** – Many congregations have entrusted their financial investments with the diocesan Pooled Funds, which are managed by the Church Society of the Diocese of Quebec. First-quarter distribution cheques will be issued in the coming days. The massive turbulence of the financial markets will

necessarily be reflected in the amounts that will be received. Congregations receiving first-quarter distributions are strongly encouraged to make a priority of using those funds to support their pastor and pay any stipend and benefits invoices. Fulfilling our payroll obligations in the coming weeks will be one of our key financial challenges. Congregations without stipend obligations are encouraged to reinvest their first-quarter distributions with the Pooled Funds to contribute to our collective portfolio's long-term sustainability. Because of the extreme volatility of the overall economic situation, and uncertainty about how long this pandemic will last, Pooled Funds distributions will need to be assessed on a quarter-by-quarter basis. Although distribution policies may change in the short term, the Pooled Funds remain a sound investment in the long term.

2. **STIPENDS AND BENEFITS** – A week ago the federal government announced a temporary 75 per cent wage subsidy aimed at helping qualified businesses and non-profit organizations avoid laying off their personnel during the pandemic. The diocese and its churches are eligible for this important short-term financial support, which will temporarily relieve many congregations of a significant financial burden at a critical time. This will mean that congregations with stipend agreements in place will still be responsible for providing 25 per cent of what they would normally contribute to their pastor's stipend and benefits package. If any congregation has concerns about its capacity to fulfill its financial obligations during this time, please do not hesitate to contact Director General Marie-Sol Gaudreau (msgaudreau@quebec.anglican.ca or 418 692 3858) to discuss what alternative arrangements might be made.
3. **OFFERINGS** – Even though our congregations aren't meeting for worship in person during this time—which means offering envelopes aren't getting filled or collections taken up—we are still able to receive donations in other ways. Those who are still able to make a financial contribution to their congregation at this time can mail a donation to their church's treasurer. You are also invited to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Church Society as a way of supporting the life and work of the wider Diocese of Quebec during this especially challenging time. You can do so by mailing a cheque to the address above or donate online by visiting CanadaHelps.org and finding the "Church Society of the Diocese of Quebec." You can also make an online contribution to any congregation of the diocese in the same way; just indicate the name of the specific church you'd like to support and the funds will be credited to them.

God promises that we will be provided with everything we need, if we stay focused on God's kingdom and God's righteousness. With God's help—and with our trust in God's providence—our church will emerge on the other side of this time of trial, giving expression to God's kingdom and God's righteousness all along the way.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce", with a small cross symbol to its left.