



ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF QUEBEC
DIOCÈSE
ANGLICAN DE QUÉBEC

To: The St Francis Regional Ministry

Harvest Thanksgiving, 2020

Dear Friends and Faithful of the St Francis Regional Ministry,

We hope this letter finds all of you safe and healthy during these unprecedented times. As the province of Quebec enters its second wave of COVID-19—with various regions being declared red and orange zones—we thought it would be helpful to send out another update on the continuing work of our Regional Ministry.

We trust that, by this time, you have received word from your parish leadership regarding the continuing cancellation of public worship. In fact, in consultation with the parish corporations, all our churches have decided to remain closed for the time being. Some have decided to remain closed for the duration of the pandemic, others are hoping for Christmas or Easter at the earliest, and others have adopted a month-by-month approach to determine reopening. We were aiming to open a few in October, particularly for Harvest Thanksgiving, but these hopes were dashed by the onset of the second wave. As you may know, the average daily case count of COVID-19 in Quebec has reached the same levels as last May—except trending upwards. The federal and provincial governments have also given stark warnings as infections increase. We are grateful to all the parish corporations for their understanding, cooperation, and wisdom.

In September, the Deanery Ministry Committee also decided it wise to forego public worship in our local care homes, as they have been a primary vector of infection during this crisis. Individual pastoral visits, however, continue to take place at the discretion of the care homes.

Thankfully, through the Government of Canada's emergency benefit and the Church Society of Quebec's investments, almost all of our ministry costs have been covered during this time. Nevertheless, we welcome your continuing financial support to sustain your local parish. Gifts can be given online to particular parishes through Canada Helps (<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/church-society-of-the-diocese-of-quebec/>), or you may contact your local wardens and treasurers for more information on how to give.

Our life as the Church continues despite our places of worship being closed. By this time, you should have received a call from both Fr Edward and Fr Giuseppe as well as one of our lay pastoral callers. (We thank you for your patience in this process, as each round contained about 250 calls across the 20 parishes.) We hope you found these opportunities for conversation and prayer as fruitful as we did, not only to connect but to ensure that all were physically and spiritually well. At the beginning of this second wave, the clergy have been checking in with Wardens and Treasurers, focusing further on the pastoral and material health of each parish. We emphasize again that our lines are open for all in need of pastoral care (Fr Giuseppe: 819 570 3433, ggagliano@quebec.anglican.ca; Fr Edward: 819 679 9957, esimonton@quebec.anglican.ca).

Life continues during this crisis, but so does death. Outdoor graveside services have taken place within the restrictions set by the provincial government. We wish to make a particular note of parishioners who have passed away, albeit not from COVID-19, while our churches have been closed: Donald Cooper (Cookshire), Elsie Ramage (Lennoxville), Elsie Mills (Lennoxville), and Jim Meigs (Coaticook). May God grant them rest eternal, and may light perpetual shine upon them.

Our buildings may be closed, but the Church continues to worship at a distance. Home Prayers with Bishop Bruce continue every Sunday at 10:30 am. This service is accessible live on the Anglican Diocese of Quebec's Facebook page, even if you do not have a Facebook account. See <https://quebec.anglican.ca/resources/at-home-worship> for the link and service sheet. To join by phone, call **647-736-0099** and enter the PIN code **343 395 677#**. (Long-distance charges may apply.) If you miss the service live, it can always be viewed later on Facebook.

Alongside worship, we have also been active through formation activities. Throughout the summer, Fr Giuseppe conducted a series on hymns and hymnody using Zoom, and was happily surprised by the turnout in the heat of

The Venerable Dr Edward Simonton OGS • Vicar General & Archdeacon of Québec
86 Queen Street, Sherbrooke, QC J1M 1J4 • Tél: (819) 679-9957 • Fax: (418) 692-3876
esimonton@quebec.anglican.ca • www.quebec.anglican.org

the season. The audio and slideshows of these presentations are available on the Deanery of St Francis website (<https://deaneryofstfrancis.com/hymns>), and the workshops are outlined in the most recent edition of the diocesan *Gazette*. We also draw your attention to the following ongoing and upcoming events:

- The Rev'd Joshua Paetkau continues to offer a service of Evening Prayer every Sunday at 7:00 pm via Facebook live (<https://www.facebook.com/joshua.paetkau>).
- Gospel-Based Discipleship is offered through the parish of St Michael, Sillery via Zoom every Wednesday at 7:00 pm (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89503046249>).
- Vous pouvez regarder « La parole sur le pouce » tous les vendredis à 12h15 par le révérend Darla Sloan de l'Église Unie (<https://zoom.us/j/95980998481>).
- The Deanery of St Francis is offering access to a course on the Gospel of Mark through Montreal Diocesan Theological College on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 from October 20th to November 17th. If you would like the Zoom link, please contact Fr Giuseppe (ggagliano@quebec.anglican.ca).
- Fr Giuseppe, as Canon for Lay Ministries, will be conducting a training workshop for Lay Readers throughout the Diocese via Zoom on November 7th (details to be announced).

Through our ongoing pastoral care, we are aware of the fatigue and frustration that folks are experiencing during this crisis. People are tired of staying indoors, of not being able to gather together, and of living day-to-day with the threat of severe illness. Most of all, as this second wave has hit, people are frightened by the duration of this crisis and the inability to see its end.

Faith, as the letter to the Hebrews reminds us, is hope in things unseen (11:1). Our tradition does not expect that we will, by our own strength, be able to predict the outcome of our trials. In fact, we are the torchbearers of millions of faithful who traversed times of shadow without seeing the sun—of those who had hope in things unseen. Abraham never saw the blessing his people would give to the world; Sarah laughed at the prospect of bearing a child in old age; Moses never entered the Promised Land; St Peter did not see the results of Christ building the Church; St Paul could not fathom the fruit of his missionary journeys. The saints of all ages have never witnessed the endgame of their struggle, persecution, or martyrdom. Yet, the faithful of every age have trusted that God would lead them, as Fr Milner-White's prayer at the base of this letter notes, "to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown."

As Jesus Christ sat with his disciples, he knew the "paths as yet untrodden" which those Twelve would undertake, and the "ventures" of all believers in their wake. He did not skirt around the fact that they would traverse "perils unknown". Instead, Christ gave his followers the most truthful and heartfelt words of encouragement which are for all generations: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, KJV).

God knows (all too well!) our limited capacity to see the end. This is not the first time, and neither will it be the last, when the Church faces such a crisis. Our test as the faithful is not in our ability to see the sun, but in our courageous embrace of hope among the shadows. The yet unseen victory is in Christ—our Hope—who dawns in our hearts, scatters the darkness, and has overcome the world.

You remain, as always, in our prayers. May Christ make visible to each of you—even in the smallest glimpses—the hope of things unseen.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Edward & Fr Giuseppe
Priests of the St Francis Regional Ministry

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go forward with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A prayer by Fr Eric Milner-White OGS

Ô Dieu, tu as appelé tes serviteurs dans des périples dont nous ne voyons pas la fin, par des sentiers encore inexplorés, aux périls inconnus. Donne-nous la foi d'y aller vaillamment, sans savoir où nous allons, mais sachant que ta main nous guide et que ton amour nous soutient, par Jésus Christ notre Seigneur. Amen.

Une prière par Père Eric Milner-White OGS