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To: The St Francis Deanery

Christmas, 2020

Dear Friends and Faithful Members of the Deanery,

We hope that all of you are safe and healthy during these troubling times. Case numbers of COVID-19 in Quebec are worse than ever and a post-pandemic life seems far away. We yearn for the light promised by the gift of Christmas.

Once again, we provide you with an update of the goings-on around the Deanery. Pastoral work continues including individual pastoral concerns and outdoor burial services within governmental guidelines. Even though we are barred from offering in-person care in various institutions, we are able to enter hospitals and seniors' residences to conduct Last Rites. Again, we wish to extend our thanks to the parish corporations for facilitating this work from a distance. The clergy are always available for any pastoral concerns you may have.

While almost all our parish corporations have decided not to open their church buildings, we wanted to bring to your attention the various opportunities for worship, both ongoing and in the Christmas season.

- Home prayers continue to be offered by Bishop Bruce and clergy from around the diocese 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.
- St Mark's Chapel, Bishop's University will resume services in-person and streamed via Facebook Live on January 17 at 10:00 am.
- St John, Waterville will continue to offer services at 9:30 am either in-person or via Zoom. Contact the Rev'd Ruth Charleau at rcharleau@quebec.anglican.ca for more information.
- Christ Church, Stanstead continues to offer in-person services which will recommence January 3 at 9:15 am in the Church Hall.
- One in-person Sunday service is currently being offered by the St Francis Regional Ministry at St Barnabas, North Hatley, at 9:00 am. As the service is live-streamed, those who wish to join from home may e-mail stbarnabastechs@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link and order of service.

Christmas Services:

- Bishop Bruce will be offering a Christmas Eve service via Facebook Live, with details to be announced.
- St Barnabas, North Hatley will hold a Christmas Eve carol service in-person and via Zoom at 4:00 pm. Zoom participation is encouraged as seating is limited due current restrictions.
- Christ Church, Stanstead will hold a Christmas Eve evening prayer service in-person at 7:00 pm.
- St John, Waterville will hold a Christmas Eve service via Zoom at 7:00 pm.
- St Mark's Chapel, Bishop's University will offer a prerecorded Christmas Eve service via Facebook at mid-day.
- An outdoor Christmas Eve gathering is being held by Lennoxville United Church at 7:30 pm.

The Bishop has asked that no in-person services be held on the first Sunday after Christmas (December 27th) to provide a safe time following any in-person Christmas services.

We continue to remember those who have died in the midst of this crisis. Since the Regional Ministry's Thanksgiving letter, Stan Logan of St George, Lennoxville, passed away. We also remember Harold Nutbrown, Irene Owen, Donald Bolton, and Barbara Howe of All Saints, East Hereford. May God grant them rest eternal, and may light perpetual shine upon them.

A note of good news: over two thousand antiquarian theological books from the Bishop's University Library have found a home in the hall of St George, Lennoxville. The money raised through a successful five-year fundraising campaign was used to purchase glass-fronted cases to house the books on the main floor of the church hall. Reproduced full-sized historical portraits have been hung on the walls. With carpets, lamps, and oak tables and chairs, the hall has been transformed into a tranquil space more attractive for local rentals and for students. The tables have been fitted with rollers making them easy to move, and no space has been lost with the addition of the bookcases, allowing the usual activities of the church to be held with ease. For more on this project, please see the January issue of the Diocesan *Gazette*.

Thank you to all who have continued to support your local parish financially. Christmas offerings and other donations may 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.

One of the great themes of the Advent season is that of an overwhelming darkness being slowly pierced by the coming radiance of Christmas. As the prophet Isaiah writes, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined" (9:2). This imagery speaks so poignantly to our current time. We are together traversing that "land of deep darkness," waiting in hopeful expectation for light to break through our gloom.

This Christmas, let us remember that nothing can separate us from the light that entered the world at Jesus' birth: "neither death, nor life . . . nor things present, nor things to come" (Rom 8:38). May that radiance, which continues to pierce the gloom, fill you with the joy and peace which surpasses all understanding. We wish you and your loved ones a merry Christmas.

Yours in Christ,

The Deanery Ministry Committee:

Fr Edward, Fr Giuseppe, Ruth Sheeran, and Jane Bishop

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