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To: The St Francis Regional Ministry

Easter, 2021

Dear Friends and Faithful Members of the St Francis Regional Ministry,

We hope that this letter finds you well as we continue through these difficult times. We are grateful that since the Deanery letter in Christmas, the fight against COVID-19 seems to be turning a tide. After a precipitous rise, case numbers in Quebec have stabilized to where they were back in September. Thankfully, vaccines are being rolled out (and we are especially happy to hear that many of you have received yours, or have an appointment already set). We remain cautious, of course, but a bit more hopeful with these signs.

Pastoral work, even at a distance, has continued in the midst of this crisis. As we write this letter, we are making our fourth round of pastoral phone calls to check in with folks throughout all our parishes. (As before, we ask for your patience given the number of calls.) Last rites and funerals continue to be held within governmental guidelines. We are always here for you if you have any pastoral concerns (Fr Giuseppe: 819 570 3433, [ggagliano@quebec.anglican.ca](mailto:ggagliano@quebec.anglican.ca); Fr Edward: 819 679 9957, [esimonton@quebec.anglican.ca](mailto:esimonton@quebec.anglican.ca)). On a positive note, we were happy to see how many Regional Ministry folks signed up for the recent Lenten groups online, especially the course on the origins of Anglicanism from Montreal Diocesan Theological College. We will also be offering an upcoming four-part course called “Wholeness and Holiness: Reconciliation in the Church and the World,” Wednesday evenings from April 21<sup>st</sup> to May 12<sup>th</sup> (more details to come). Our thanks, as always, goes to our faithful parish corporations and lay leadership who facilitate this work during these strange times.

Almost all our parish corporations have decided not to open their church buildings. Just as some had hoped to open for Harvest Thanksgiving but held back with increasing case numbers, some parishes were also hoping for Easter services but, in the end, decided to play it safe as we are still in a precarious Orange Zone. Many are waiting for their vaccinations before returning to church. We nevertheless wish to remind you of the various opportunities for worship, both ongoing and in the Easter 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.
- One in-person Sunday service is currently being offered 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](mailto:stbarnabastechs@gmail.com) to receive the Zoom link and order of service.
- 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/81991071585>).
- 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>; code: 890664).

Holy Week and Easter Services:

- Bishop Bruce will be offering a series of Holy Week services and an Easter service via Facebook Live, with details to be announced (see connection details above).
- St Barnabas, North Hatley will hold a Good Friday service at 1:00 pm, as well as an Easter Sunday service at 9:00 am, both in-person and via Zoom (see connection details above). Zoom participation is encouraged as seating is limited due to current restrictions.

We continue to remember those who have died in the midst of this crisis. We were saddened by the passing of Pearl Custeau, of St George, Lennoxville, in her 102<sup>nd</sup> year. Rest eternal grant to her, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon her.

Thank you to all who have continued to support your local parish financially. Easter 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.

We have been fortunate to take advantage of the Government of Canada's wage subsidy. This assistance, combined with our collective investments for ministry in the region, has meant that the costs of the clergy, lay readers, and administrative staff has been kept to a bare minimum during the pandemic. We expect this to continue through the spring. The Diocesan Executive Council has also authorized a financial plan for the parishes that will see around a 50% reduction of Fair Share on all non-investment income. We should be thankful that together we have had the resources to avoid what could have been a catastrophic blow to many of our churches.

This past year has been painful, especially with our inability to gather together. Thankfully, there are signs of hope around us, not only in vaccine roll-outs, but even in the rejuvenation of nature. As the snow begins to melt, the sun shines more fully, and bulbs begin to poke through the ground, our minds are primed for the joys of Easter. It's as though the world itself is awakening, after being trapped in a long, deep sleep.

We are sometimes tempted to think that Jesus Christ's coming back to life was a one-off event, achieved in Jerusalem, but never again. In Easter, however, we recall that resurrection—not death—is the true nature of the universe. New life is not an isolated or unusual event, but the destiny of all things in Christ. As St Paul puts it, Jesus is simply the “first fruits” of those who have died and rose again (1 Cor. 15:20-23). He is first, and we cling to hope that all things will follow in the path he has pioneered.

Even in the midst of trials, the Church has always stood for this stark yet beautiful fact: death is followed by resurrection, despair by rejoicing, and isolation by reunion. We find ourselves once again celebrating an unusual Easter apart, but we proclaim nevertheless that the power of Resurrection is undiminished. Encouraged by the signs around us—great and small—may we hold fast to this ancient hope.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Edward and 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