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To: The St Francis Regional Ministry

Easter, 2022

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

We hope this letter finds you all doing well as the Eastern Townships begin to bloom. At this time of year, we are reminded everywhere of Christ's resurrection, and that the arc of the universe bends towards new life.

There is much for which we are grateful during this time. Most churches on the regular worship schedule and care homes have reopened for in-person worship since winter's most recent shutdown. Even at a distance, we have continued to offer Christian formation classes through Montreal Dio. We are also particularly grateful in this moment that annual vestry meetings are taking place for the first time since 2020. Because we have not had vestry meetings for such a long time, we will do our best to both be present rather than dividing the meetings between the clergy. We look forward to what we know will be important conversations.

We wish we could say by this point that we are through the pandemic, but we are now entering a sixth wave in Quebec. In the early days of this crisis, the default position during infection peaks was to not meet in person, with churches opting in only if they felt they could do so safely. At this point, we seem to be moving into an "opt-out" strategy where worship will continue in our parishes unless corporations believe it is unsafe to do so. In discussions with parishes, it seems best to assume a regular pattern of worship for those willing to attend. This shift is also akin to that of our wider society as we learn to live with the virus. Nevertheless, we ask wardens to be in touch with us if they wish to cancel services, either due to peaks in infection or lack of attendance. For those who wish to stay at home, our Sunday diocesan service is on Facebook at 4:00 pm (<https://quebec.anglican.ca/resources/at-home-worship>) and St Barnabas, North Hatley continues to broadcast Sunday services at 9:00 am via Zoom (contact [stbarnabastechs@gmail.com](mailto:stbarnabastechs@gmail.com) for the link).

We know that the war in Ukraine hangs heavy on all our hearts. Enclosed in this envelope is a pastoral letter that Bishop Bruce has jointly issued with Bishop Mary Irwin-Gibson of Montreal. We have been pleased to see efforts in the Regional Ministry to support the people of Ukraine and all of us are encouraged consider ways in which we can assist the innocent in this war.

In our pastoral work, it has become clear that the extended isolation and uncertainty of the pandemic and global crisis is taking its toll on everyone. Weariness itself has become a kind of pandemic, affecting the rich and poor and young and old alike. We encourage us all to practice patience with others, and to seek out those moments where we may be like Christ to one another. As always, we are 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)).

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

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Even since the early days of the Church, Christians have been called fools for their belief in the resurrection of Christ. St Paul himself addressed this in his first letter to the Corinthians, writing that “the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1:18). He adds, “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1:25). In some ways, it would be easy for us to be seen as fools once again, proclaiming the power of resurrection in the midst of mass illness and global crises. Just as we are learning to live with a pandemic that has devastated the world, the war in Ukraine has reared its head, snatching away our hope once again.

On the other hand, we would also be fools to think that the Church proclaimed this truth only in easy times. The history of our faith is one of light in the midst of darkness, and not light for its own sake. After all, the glory of the Resurrection comes through the seeming foolishness of the Cross.

In one of our pastoral letters in the early parts of the pandemic, we wrote, “Our test as the faithful is not in our ability to see the sun, but in our courageous embrace of hope among the shadows.” Even today, this is our mission as Christians as we walk through darkened valleys. It is Christ, our Good Shepherd, who leads us through by the light of his resurrection. We pray that this Eastertide, even amid weariness and worry, you may find renewed hope in the promises of Christ.

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