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To: The St Francis Regional Ministry

Harvest, 2022

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

As the autumn colours return to the Eastern Townships, we hope this letter finds you enjoying a safe and happy Harvest. While the pandemic is still with us and its repercussions are being felt, we hope your way of life has returned to what we used to call “normal” as much as possible.

We write this letter in the midst of grief with the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She was a faithful servant not only to her realms, but to God. We are particularly grateful that we were able to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee at two services this summer in North Hatley and Georgeville. As you receive this letter, national and provincial commemorations (both religious and civil) will be taking place throughout the country. Following these, local parishes are most welcome to have their own commemorations. Wardens may speak with us if this is something our communities would like to do. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Over the past several months, we have been travelling around the Regional Ministry’s parishes to the first vestry meetings that have taken place since 2020. Given this fact, we have tried to both be present at each of them when possible, rather than dividing them up between the clergy. This has been an important time to reflect on where our churches are, as well as to reconnect with folks outside of Sunday services. We thank all the wardens, treasurers, and other local leaders who have made this process as seamless as possible.

We are happy to welcome back Spencer Nadeau as our Administrative Assistant as of September 13th. Spencer has returned to the Townships after completing his master's degree at Acadia University and we are very grateful to have his help. Please direct any administrative inquiries his way (snadeau@quebec.anglican.ca; 819 347 8529).

As we mentioned in our previous letters, a number of parishes have decided to close in the wake of the pandemic. In June, a consultation team from Quebec City spent a week in the Townships to examine these buildings and provide recommendations as to how they could be used by potential buyers. The third phase of the closing process has unfortunately been delayed, as we are awaiting the results of surveyors. When we receive these results, we will enter a communications phase that will provide information to both parishioners and the public at large.

The month of October brings several special events and activities:

- In honour of St Francis, patron saint of animals, Bishop Bruce will be joining St Barnabas, North Hatley for the Blessing of Pets service on October 1st at 10:00 am. This event will take place in River Park. All are welcome to bring their furry, feathery, or scaly friends to receive a blessing.

- As Harvest is a time of church dedications, all are welcome to join St George, Lennoxville in celebrating its bicentennial year. We will kick off this milestone with a bicentennial service with Bishop Bruce on October 2nd at 11:00 am, featuring special music, a new hymn written for the occasion, and a brunch to follow. Stay tuned for more events as this special year progresses.
- We are happy to announce that we will once again be offering an online course from Montreal Diocesan Theological College. This fall, the course is entitled “The Christian Gospel and Pop Culture” and will be presented by the the Rev’d Canon Dr Jesse Zink. By examining contemporary movies, books, music, and other cultural sources, participants will learn more about the gospel message and how it still needs to be heard in our world. It will take place Tuesday evenings from October 18th to November 8th from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, with a short discussion group following. As before the pandemic, we will resume an in-person showing and discussion group at St George, Lennoxville. If you wish to sign up, please send a note to Fr Giuseppe (ggagliano@quebec.anglican.ca).

In our pastoral work, it is clear that the effects of the pandemic and current economic fears continue to affect everyone. Weariness itself has become a kind of illness, 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; Fr Edward: 819 679 9957, esimonton@quebec.anglican.ca).

Harvest is a time for us to take stock of our lives and to count our various blessings. While the pandemic still continues—including its social and economic repercussions—we are at least grateful for the bits of our lives that have been restored. It is typical for us to assume that blessings from God are deserved or undeserved based on our own action. The Christian faith, however, tells a different story. Our God is one of grace, who gives to us freely out of his unfathomable love. We receive his blessings like gifts rather than wages, and we say “thank you” by emulating his graciousness in our lives.

As our common life has resumed to regular rhythms, it is so easy for us to forget what a blessing life can be—even in the simple delight of gathering together. It is equally easy for us to forget those for whom life is more suffering than joy. As we reflect on the things for which we are thankful, let us all remember to share the unmerited gifts of God.

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