



The Office of the Metropolitan of Ontario The Anglican Church of Canada

The Most Reverend Anne Germond
Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario

October 7, 2020

*"Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us."*¹

Dear people of God in Ontario,

In this season of returning thanks to God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer we bring greetings to you and those you love. While our Thanksgiving celebrations will be very different in our sanctuaries and in our homes this year, as God's faithful people we remain "joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer" (Romans 12.12), lifting our eyes to God whose unending faithfulness, generosity, and graciousness sustains and nurtures us.

The bishops and executive officers of our ecclesiastical province met recently, and we are greatly encouraged as we shared with one another the thorough way in which parishes have undertaken the necessary preparations for the safe reopening of churches for public worship.

We want to offer a word of thanks to our clergy and lay leaders: you have so faithfully laboured these last months in what at times has felt like an altogether different vineyard for ministry; thank-you for your care and witness, your leadership and risk-taking, your humility and perseverance, all for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We know how hard you are working, especially through the re-opening process and as many of you offer online worship services for those who are not yet ready or able to return to our churches. Thank-you, more than we can say, for your tireless work in our Church.

And a word of thanks to all Anglicans in our province: thank-you for the many beautiful and generous ways you have cared for each other, for your neighbours, and for your community in this extraordinary time; for your patience and graciousness as we have cautiously adapted our ministries to meet the pandemic, and for your willingness to learn new routines and procedures for our worship, for the love of one another and our neighbours.

With the second wave of the coronavirus cresting, we know that the pandemic will be our new reality for the foreseeable future. Now, more than ever is a time for vigilance, a time to abide by the protocols we have put in place.

At the same time, we recognize that we are in a very different place than we were in March of this year. We know more about COVID-19 now, and our parish leaders have worked hard to adapt and put strict protocols in place which will reduce the risk of spreading the virus. We are heartened that the provincial officials have commended our rigorous liturgical protocols and cautious ministry guidelines which are informed by the advice published by Ontario's Ministry of Health.

While we do not expect to close our churches across the entire province again, we must continue to be nimble in our approach, adapting our protocols at the local level based on the current conditions. There may be times when individual diocesan bishops will have to put stricter measures in place in their diocese, or in a particular area or region, and then ease them as public health indicators warrant. The oscillating pattern of imposing restrictions and easing them will likely become part of the 'new normal' of our lives for the next number of months, even after a vaccine has been approved.

In all things, we hold in steadfast prayer the wellbeing of all people in our cities, towns, and villages as the pandemic persists. We are especially mindful of accumulative effects of the isolation we are experiencing, the anxiety we are enduring, and the grief we are bearing. With winter approaching, we are concerned for those who are particularly vulnerable, even though we know that the Church is responding with extraordinary care and compassion, following the call of the prophets to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

As the lyrics of the hymn cited above remind us, our God is ever near us, to love, comfort, and support us through all the seasons of our lives, including this season of pandemic. May we hold onto this truth in our hearts, as we give thanks to God for all our blessings.

With gratitude and affection,



Metropolitan and Archbishop of Algoma and Moosonee

On behalf of the Bishops and Executive Officers of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario

The Right Reverend Jenny Andison, The Right Reverend Andrew Asbil, The Right Reverend Susan Bell, The Right Reverend Peter Fenty, The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, The Right Reverend Michael Oulton, The Right Reverend Shane Parker, The Right Reverend Kevin Robertson, The Right Reverend Riscylla Shaw, and The Right Reverend Dr. Todd Townshend.

The Venerable Larry Armstrong, Canon Mary Conliffe, The Venerable Linda Hill, The Venerable Harry Huskins, The Venerable Dr. Jay Koyle, The Venerable Bill Mous, The Venerable Tanya Phibbs, and Mr. Alex Pierson.

1. "Now Thank We All Our God": a well-known Thanksgiving hymn written by Pastor Martin Rinkhart who lived in the walled town of Eilenburg during the 30 years war (1618-1648). In 1637 the plague claimed the lives of 8000 people including members of the town council, hundreds of children, pastors in neighbouring towns and Rinkhart's wife. It is said that there were some days he buried 40-50 people. After the plague the city was hit by a famine, but through grief and loss, suffering and death, Rinkhart always looks to his Saviour and thanked God for the blessings he had. "Now Thank We All Our God" began as a family prayer before meals and was later sung as a national thanksgiving when the Thirty Year's War ended.