

A Message to the people of God in Algoma and Moosonee

January 22, 2021

“Trust in him at all times, O people;

Pour out your heart before him;

God is a refuge for us.”

(Psalm 62.8 – appointed for 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany)



Bookmark for 2021 – these will be distributed through the diocese in the coming year.

Photo credit Don McCormick, All Saints', Huntsville

Dear people of God,

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your spirits this week.

The theme of *call* features prominently in the lections these Sundays after the Epiphany of the Lord.

In the Hebrew scriptures, there was the call of the boy Samuel in the Temple who did not understand and had to be taught to listen for the word ‘that he alone can hear’¹.

This week the word of the Lord will find the reluctant Jonah, whose name means ‘dove’ and whose father’s name means ‘faithfulness’. We might read the opening lines of the assigned passage like this – “The word of the LORD came to dove, son of faithfulness.” (Jonah 3.1) We might also expect to find a prophet ready and eager to serve. Those familiar with this well loved tale know that Jonah runs from the call to go to Nineveh. They also know that, even after preaching the world’s worst sermon, the whole city repents.

The gospels continue with the theme of *call* with Jesus announcing the good news that God’s expected kingdom is coming near. Fishermen, hearing their own names being called with an invitation to ‘come and see’, leave their nets and family to follow Jesus. Others like Philip, Nathaneal, and Matthew are soon added to the list of the first disciples who enter into service to God.

Every follower of Jesus, past or present, knows that there is a cost and a burden to being called by God. Many refuse the call believing they are ill equipped or not up to the task of a new adventure with God.

The calling of the early fishermen reminds us that Christ invited very ordinary, unqualified but hard working people to join him in announcing good news.

This is the same ‘good news’ of the voice crying in the wilderness in Isaiah (40.9), where in spite of all present circumstances God is at work in the world to bring about restoration and healing.

“Believe in the good news” (Mark 1.15)

Good news has been in short supply lately. The once in a century pandemic we are living through has already infected more than 98 million individuals (recorded) in every country on earth. Two million have died, unemployment has soared and the UN predicts that it will force over 200 million people into extreme poverty. We have not even begun to measure the cost on the mental health of people or on those living isolated lives.

Yet, the pandemic has also taught us that change is possible, and is already pointing a way forward. That IS good news. As people worked from home and travel on subways and highways decreased, harmful emissions were radically reduced. The genome of SARS -

COV -2 was shared by Chinese scientists within weeks of its discovery and within a year not one, but several vaccines are now ready to be distributed. That is a remarkable demonstration of what science can achieve when it works collaboratively.

Within hours of the lockdown being announced last March, churches around the world and across Canada found ways of being the church and offering worship which, under normal circumstances might never have been considered. Numbers recorded in online services have far exceeded expectations. And, through it all, we have continued to reach out to one another by staying in touch virtually or through old fashioned snail mail.

All of that IS good news. If we keep looking for it, we will continue to find it.

Tucked away between the Old Testament and New Testament passages this Sunday is Psalm 62 which invites us to turn our eyes to God and place our trust and our confidence in God. The pandemic rages on, but the strong and simple words of verse 5 – “For God alone my soul waits in silence” call on us, who have been called to God’s service, that God alone is our refuge and our strong rock.

“We have new and highly effective tools in our fight against Covid -19”

(Dr. Teresa Tam)

The important ministry offered by faith communities, along with the leadership we have shown throughout the pandemic was noted by Dr. Teresa Tam, Canada’s ‘top doctor’. This was in a webinar on vaccine distribution that Archdeacon Jay Koyle and I attended with 1300 other faith leaders on Wednesday this week.

Dr. Tam commended faith leaders and communities for the way in which we have reached out to our members offering solace and guidance and she thanked us for the sacrifices we have all made in giving up many of our sacred rituals for the common good. Dr. Tam noted that it was paradoxical that at a time when we need each other the most, we must be apart. She used the words ‘strong and resilient’ to describe faith communities at this time and commended us for how we have implemented safe practices for the safe return to our places of worship.

At the end of a very informative session on how the vaccine will be distributed across Canada she thanked us for our leadership and called us ‘ambassadors to Covid’ in the coming months as the vaccine is rolled out.

Dr. Tam named three ways in which we as faith communities can continue to demonstrate leadership in the fight against Covid – 19.

1. Help inform people on vaccines by sharing credible information from reputable sources. Distinguish false information from the truth. Accept the vaccine when it is offered to you - those with compromised immune systems should check with their health care provider first. Dr. Tam referred us to a toolkit on the [Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca)

website and the @wellnesstogether page for those struggling with mental health issues.

2. Faith leaders and communities should remain vigilant and leading the way in continuing to follow the protocols that are in place in order to give the vaccine, “a bit of a runway” to get going. For us this means that until everyone in Canada is vaccinated that we will continue to wear masks, wash hands, keep socially distanced from one another in worship, and do as much as we can online.
3. Maintain social, emotional and spiritual closeness with one another – making extra efforts to reach out to those who are isolated, bereaved, in quarantine or who are struggling with mental health issues.

I echo Dr. Tam’s expressions of thanks for everything you have done over the last challenging year of plague. We have come through it and with the hope of a vaccine within reach (many in Moosonee have already been vaccinated) the return to normalcy is in sight. The calls to action Dr. Tam has named are all manageable for us, and I call on you now to do everything possible to do as she recommends. Already a number of congregations in the Diocese of Algoma have offered their church buildings as potential vaccination sites. This speaks to the desire of Anglicans to contribute to the health and well-being of their communities. In all things - keep hope alive.



The bookmarks with my motto for 2021 have come in. Many thanks to Don McCormick for permission to use the photograph that was taken on March 8th, 2020 at Archdeacon Kelly Baetz’s collation. The last service before the pandemic was declared. Thanks also to

Canon John Gibaut for writing the prayer on the reverse side of the card which I used recently in a prayer for our ministry as members of the Anglican Communion.

As I reflect on the words, “LOVING KINDNESS” in my motto, I wonder how we might all be agents of kindness in the coming weeks as the state of emergency in Ontario continues. We are great at reaching out to the members of our own faith communities but what about folk who have no connection with our local congregation and who are struggling with isolation or are struggling to find hope.

Look around your local community and find a place where your congregation could touch them with an act of ‘loving kindness’. It could come in many ways – Valentine’s cards or heart shaped treats for frontline workers or those in Long Term Care Facilities. A display of thanks in a drive by greeting at the hospital for overburdened emergency care workers. I’ve bought pancake mix and maple syrup for our neighbours on Simpson Street for Family Day weekend. Share the acts of loving kindness on your parish or deanery websites or Facebook pages. We have good news to share!

Thank you also for your financial gifts to the church over the last year. Please continue to be generous in your offering so that the church may thrive in the future. If you have been praying with a community online and have not given them a donation, please consider them in your weekly offering.

Now that the state of emergency has extended beyond Ash Wednesday, we will be sending out resources for use in your online or livestream services.

Announcements for the Diocese of Algoma: –

The Ven. Dr. Jay Koyle will be collated as Diocesan Archdeacon in an online service which will be broadcast from St. Luke’s Cathedral on February 2nd 2021 at 4:30pm on the day the church remembers the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. I am delighted that the Rt. Rev. Dr. Todd Townshend will be the preacher for this celebration. There will only be five present in the Cathedral for the taping of the collation. If you wish to make a thank offering to the Episcopal Endowment Fund for Jay’s new ministry, please send your gift to the Diocese of Algoma. Your prayers are invited for Archdeacon Jay as he prepares for this celebration.

Synod delayed until September 2021

In consultation with Archbishop’s Council members and the Synod office staff I have made the decision to delay the May 2021 Diocesan Synod until September. Synod will be now be held on Friday September 17th and Saturday September 18th 2021. Delegates elected at Annual meetings this year are kindly asked to hold these dates firm.

Announcement for the Diocese of Moosonee – Wednesday evenings in Lent

Archbishop Fred and I will be offering Evening Prayers/ Reflections via Zoom on Wednesday evenings during Lent and you are warmly invited to attend. More information will be forthcoming in the coming days.

You are invited to pray for the Rev. Gladys Matoush and the Rev. George Matoush as they are installed as the co-incumbents of St. Philip's Anglican Church in Chisasibi. The Installation will take place via ZOOM ahead of the regular Saturday morning Gospel - based discipleship on Saturday 30th January, 2021 at 9am. The Deputy Chief of Chisasibi, Paul Napash will be present to welcome Revs. George and Gladys.

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With gratitude and the assurance of my prayers and love,

+Anne

Reference book

1. “Connections” A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching Year B (Volume 1) ed. Joel Green.