

Letter to God's people in Algoma

from

Archbishop Anne Germond



June 4, 2021

Dear People of God in Algoma,

Grace and peace as we seek to be faithful to our vocation as followers of Jesus. This week many Christians around the world are marking 'Corpus Christi' or the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

The Prayer of the Day for Corpus Christi from the Church of England is beautiful.

I invite you to pray it with me:

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament you have given us the memorial of your passion;

Grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries of your body and blood that we may know within ourselves and show forth in our lives the fruit of your redemption;

For you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Well known theologian and preacher William Willimon has written a small book about the Lord's Supper and the Christian life, "Sunday Dinner". He describes the sacrament of the Eucharist as a 'visible and physical act of God's self giving love.' (Page 27).

We can give nothing to God, but God is constantly giving to us. We have failed God and fall short of who we wish to be, but God constantly looks for us and delights in our return. The good we would do we do not do and feel unworthy.

God comes to us in God's own way with these words: "Here, have some bread, take a sip of this wine. This is my body you are eating, my blood you are drinking. May it be nourishment for your life and your spirit." Holy Communion is a gracious gift of love from God. The bread which Jesus took the night before he died is blessed. The cup of wine he shared is blessed. In receiving these precious gifts we too are blessed.

I commend the "**Roadmap to Reopen the Diocese of Algoma**" which Archdeacon Jay has prepared for our use. It is an excellent and informative piece of work and I extend thanks to Archdeacon Jay for the time, consultation, and effort in preparing it.

At the end of the document, Jay has included a teaching on Holy Eucharist which is timely as we consider introducing Holy Eucharist with the distribution of Reserved Sacrament during the early stages of reopening.

In the Rationale, Archdeacon Jay notes that 'far too many communicants fail to recognize something foundational to our identity and mission as church: the Body of Christ is not only on the Table, it is also around the Table.' (Koyle) This is why any celebration of Holy Eucharist does not happen with the presider alone, but something that happens at Table fellowship with others.

Archdeacon Jay also notes that there is too much emphasis on the 'Body of Christ' as something we ingest for a 'dose of grace' rather than recognising the whole people of God as the true body of Christ. In the Anglican Church we are and believe what we say. When we affirm after the breaking of the bread, "We who are many are one body for we all share in the one bread," we are saying something very important – we are the Body of Christ together.

I pray that when we reopen, outdoors or in our sanctuaries, the doors of our churches will open wide enough for any who wish to enter to come in, and that we will be a people who walk with people as they journey deeper in the life of faith so they can take their place at the table as those committed to being Christ's body for the world.

We have heard it said that the 'family that prays together, stays together'. What Covid has been teaching us in spades with many months of 'stay at home' orders in place, is that the 'family that eats together stays together'. Anglicans (like so many other denominations) often do their best work around a table where food is at the centre of it. "The disintegration of table fellowship often leads to the dissolution of the family. People who observe churches note that churches which enjoy a high level of fellowship, vitality, service, friendliness and growth invariably spend much time at the table." (Willimon)

I pray the day will soon come that we can enjoy Sunday dinner together again.



Poppies of remembrance in full bloom



“All Children Matter”

In addition to these few thoughts on Holy Eucharist, I want to let you know about a pastoral letter and calls to action for Moosonee and Algoma which I am preparing in conjunction with Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Assisting Bishop of Moosonee. This pastoral letter relates to the discovery a week ago of a mass unmarked grave containing the remains of 215 precious children of God on the grounds of a residential school in Kamloops. This shocking discovery has been a tipping point for so many people across Canada and in the church, in the same way that George Floyd’s murder last year became a tipping point for the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement with its calls for justice and accountability.

The ripple effect of the discovery of this mass grave has been enormous, the pain deep and hard. I grieve for the families of the children buried without so much as a white cross marking their final resting place, whose unimaginable sorrow has resurfaced. I grieve for the survivors and those who carry the wounds of residential schools. I grieve for those for whom this has injured their faith and are leaving the church.

Bishop Stephen Andrews wrote powerfully earlier in the week about the importance of names that ‘identify, personify, awaken memory’ which I commend to you and can be found [here](#). The children buried on the grounds of Kamloops Residential School with no marker had names and were loved by family members. The prophet Isaiah said, “I will not forget you. I have carved your name in the palms of my hands.” (Isaiah 49.15-16) When we forget, God remembers who we are.

As Anglicans let us remember these 215 children whose spirits have awakened something within us. In a Facebook post Matthew Mukash said, “There is a reason the spirit of these children decided to wake us up at this point in time.” It is truly a Kairos moment for us as individuals and collectively as a church and a nation. **“Every child matters.”**

Archbishop Fred and I, as leaders in the church, are committed to the ongoing work of reconciliation and healing, not with empty words or vague promises, but rather using words that include repentance and that are accompanied with tangible calls to action.

Next week the Executive Committee of Algoma will be meeting. I will consult with this body on an action I would like to take, and release a pastoral letter following that meeting. Please hold in prayer all those who have been adversely affected by last week's news, and join with me in committing to engaging in meaningful action.

Some congregations in Algoma are already planning prayer services in memory of the 215 children of God in Kamloops. Thank you for taking these initiatives even as you are mindful of the need to gather with the present covid restrictions. A collection of shoes was left outside the front doors of St. Luke's Cathedral earlier this week. Dean Jim McShane prepared a beautiful prayer service which he and I, along with Indigenous Elder Willard Pine and The Rev. Lana Grawbarger from Garden River led. Elder Willard Pine's teaching was very moving. The service can be found on the Diocese of Algoma's Facebook page.



I remind you that, in Canada, the month of June has been designated as *National Indigenous History Month* and June 21 is observed as National Indigenous Peoples Day.

In the Anglican Church of Canada, a Sunday on or near June 21 is often observed as the National Indigenous Day of Prayer. I commend for your use the excellent resources that are available on the Anglican Church of Canada's website, including the 'Litany for the Healing and Restoration of our Church' (Diocese of Rupert's Land Synod 2017) as you plan for Prayer services on June 21st.

May God's love and peace be with you now and always.

+*Anne*

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