

February 11th 2017 - February 11th, 2022



*“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’.”*

Isaiah 52.7

And in a blink...

Dear friends in Christ,

On the fifth anniversary of my consecration I write to express my deepest gratitude to God and to each one of you for the way you have prayerfully supported me and caringly embraced me over the years. Today I recommit myself to this privileged and sacred responsibility and to serving our church faithfully, joyfully following the One who came not to be served but to serve.

February 11th, 2017 stands out for me as one of those mountaintop moments we have all experienced in life. As I recall that snowy February weekend, I think of family and friends who traveled long distances to be with our family. They thought they'd come for a celebration but ended up helping us with the heavy lifting of unpacking boxes and hanging pictures as we moved into our new home.

I think of the bishops, clergy, and lay who knelt with me in prayer at St. Luke's Cathedral and who continue to do that now as we gather in synods and on the councils of the church. I think of the work that our Synod office and Cathedral staff did to prepare so well for the service, including making arrangements to have the service 'livestreamed' for family members overseas. Who'd have thought that five years later livestreaming would be a daily occurrence in ministry! I remember vividly the number of people who congratulated me afterwards – people I didn't even know who promised their support and their prayers and continue to this day.

Of the ordination service itself, I remember entering the Cathedral to the sound of hundreds of voices lifting their hearts to God in prayer and praise, the solemnity of the examination, the quietness of the prayers, and the holiest of all moments in the laying on of hands. I recall being given a bible and being vested with a ring, a pectoral cross, a mitre, and an episcopal staff, all signs and symbols of the office of a bishop. They are a daily reminder of the office I hold and of faithfulness and loyalty, of authority and guidance, of teaching and learning, and closeness to God through prayer and service to others.

I continue to be filled with a sense of awe at the work before me, as well as a feeling of unworthiness for this high office in the Church. Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold once gave the following advice to the bishops of the Episcopal Church when he said – *“the more vestments and things you put on, the more within you must take off.”* It is with lowliness of heart and great humility as I serve that I often find myself in Paul's letter to the Colossians and the words of my motto in 2018 – *“As chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.....and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”* (Col. 3.12 &15)

The words from the old familiar hymn, *Come Down, O Love Divine* speak to me now as they did on the day of my consecration.

*Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,
And lowliness become mine inner clothing;
True lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler part, and o'er its own shortcomings weep with
loathing.*

The last five years have slipped by in the blink of an eye with many more mountain top moments in (I hope) our collective memory bank. There are the countless sermons preached and bread taken, blessed, broken and shared as I've been welcomed in parishes around Algoma and Moosonee. It has been a delight to witness people of all ages reaffirming their faith in confirmation and ordaining new deacons and priests in the church. Over the years we have welcomed new clergy to the dioceses of Algoma and Moosonee, and others accepting new charges within.

Witnessing parishes flourishing in ministry warms my heart as together we share in the 'gathering work of Christ so that his newness of life overflows into our hearts, homes, churches and communities.' It is my daily delight to work with the wonderful staff in the Synod office and to have uplifting conversations with leaders in congregations as we plan for a hopeful future. In Christ we are a new creation (Motto for 2022) and I am excited to see the new things that God has planned for us in the coming years.

Experiencing the fellowship of bishops from around the Anglican Church of Canada and around the globe have brought new insights into what it means to be part of the Anglican Communion. Our lived realities are so very different but the Christ we worship remains the same yesterday, today and forever.

Those mountaintop moments have been counter-balanced with the darker valley times and dry seasons. I've wept at the graves of too many clergy who died too soon and good priests who felt called to serve elsewhere. Every week there have been emails requesting prayers for sick and dying members of our congregations – many of them have been called home. Our church has been enriched by their presence and gifts and mourns what we have lost through their deaths.

There are no easy answers to give parishes waiting in the dark for a new incumbent when no one is answering a call. There have been difficult conversations with those who find themselves at the crossroads, worrying about their future. I'm imperfect and have made mistakes. There have been sleepless nights as I wrestled over difficult decisions and occasions when I felt isolated and alone in making them.

Leading a diocese through a pandemic was the very last thing I was prepared for or imagined I would be doing over the last two years. They have been a period of enormous challenge and tremendous growth as we have witnessed the very best as the global village has done its best to contain the virus. We have loved our neighbours by following protocols and caring for them through masks and windows. It hasn't been all doom and gloom as new possibilities have opened up for us to connect on virtual platforms for everything from worship to family game nights. The gospel's reach has extended beyond our borders and around the world.

Like so many faithful Anglicans and Canadians who long for the day when the pandemic is over, I too am confused and dismayed by what I am witnessing in our nation with freedom convoys and other protesters wrecking havoc in the lives of ordinary citizens with demands to end all Covid mandates. It seems like a reckless irresponsible and very unCanadian way to be ending this fearful time. This is not the time for more division, enmity or hatred, but for us to continue working together for the greater good of all so that we can enjoy the liberties and freedoms our great nation has to offer in a post pandemic world. In this time of unrest and uncertainty may we be instruments God's peace, our words grace filled bringing peace and our every action in loving care for our neighbour.

As we continue on the path of faith together in Christ's name through this unsettled time, I commend this prayer for our Nation from the Book of Alternative Services for your reflection:

Almighty God, you have given us this good land as our heritage. May we prove ourselves a people mindful of your generosity and glad to do your will. Bless our land with honest industry, truthful education, and an honourable way of life. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance; and from every evil course of action. Make us who came from many nations with many different languages a united people. Defend our liberties and give those whom we have entrusted with the authority of government the spirit of wisdom, that there may be justice and peace in our land. When times are prosperous, let our hearts be thankful; and, in troubled times, do not let our trust in you fail. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.” (3 John 2)

Every blessing to you and those you love,

+ *Anne*

Just one more thing.....

If I don't see you in person in 2022, I look forward to seeing you on Zoom. Do sign up for the Wednesday evening Lenten Book Study on Archbishop Desmond Tutu's book, "In God's Name" on March 9th, 16th, 23rd and April 6th. It all begins with a Lunch and Learn Conversation with one of the Arch's priests and retired Bishop of Johannesburg Brian Germond on March 1st at noon. Bishop Brian will share his first-hand experiences of being in ministry with Archbishop Desmond as well as what it was like in the church in South Africa through the apartheid years.

An Ad Clerum will be distributed shortly with the links for this book study and for several other educational opportunities.