

ST. PHILIP'S ANGLICAN PARISH

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Dear Parishioners & Friends of St. Philip's Parish:

As you may already know, yesterday (March 16th), following consultation with the Cathedral Chapter and our diocesan Medical Officer, Dr. Stephen Major, our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Peddle, made an unprecedented decision to immediately close down all of our diocesan parish churches until further notice. This decision was based upon the current crisis the world is facing as it grapples with trying to control the Corona Virus, also known as Covid – 19, and do everything in our control to protect the population, especially those most at risk, such as the elderly and others that may have underlying health conditions that put them in that risk bracket. I have never known a time when a bishop had to make this type of decision, and, in this situation all three of our Anglican dioceses in NL have taken this important step, as well as other denominational churches. Like the rest of the churches, businesses and organizations in our province, and indeed the whole of Canada and beyond, your church is thinking primarily of keeping you as safe as possible.

This closure of parish churches means that all worship services, including Sundays and mid-week Lenten services, as well as meetings and other gatherings have been cancelled indefinitely. Funerals will be the exception (as we can all understand), but even then it is hoped that only close friends and family will be in attendance. In addition to that, clergy will still be available to you if needed, and I will still be working in the office daily if you need to see me for any reason.

I also encourage our parishioners to make use of the normal worship times by doing family prayers at home until we can come back together again. The Book of Alternative Services (BAS) is quite easy to follow if you would like to keep up with the weekly scripture readings and prayers. If you don't have a copy of the book at home you can also find it online at this web address: <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/BAS.pdf> or I would be pleased to drop one off to you. Even though we may not be together in the normal fashion on Sunday morning

it is still good for us to know that we are still praying and using our lectionary readings at the same time.

I do want to encourage you to maintain your level of financial support to your church throughout this uncertain time. We don't know how long our churches will be closed, and in the meantime we still have our normal costs of operation, so it is absolutely essential that we all do our part to ensure we can remain financially viable as we try to get through this crisis together. During office times if you would like to drop your regular offerings in please stop by and they will be deposited into the safe for the weekly count. We have also been encouraging E-Giving which works perfectly for a situation which we are currently facing. This form will also be posted to our parish website for those who wish to sign up.

Above all else, what is most important is that we do whatever is humanly possible to stay well during this crisis by heeding all the advice of our health authorities. Thank God, so far, we have just one presumptive case of Covid-19 in our province (as of March 17th), (we pray for the recovery of that individual) which is a good indication that we are getting excellent advice and following it. Pray also for the rest of the nation, and, indeed the world, for those already afflicted, for families of loved ones who have died, for our healthcare professionals, for research workers vigorously trying to find a vaccine to eradicate the virus, and for our world. At a time like this we realize how intertwined we are as nations work together for a common cause, we are indeed our brother and our sister's keeper, with a responsibility to each other.

I am here if you need me for any reason, the office will be open. You can reach me by calling 895 – 0715 (office) or 693-8537 (new cell phone number). The following is a short prayer by our Primate, and may we all be sustained by prayer in these difficult and uncertain times:

May God's peace hold us in the midst of the fears that swirl around our communities and at times within our own hearts. May we find courage to compassionately care for one another and find strength in community. May we find comfort in the knowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:38-39)

Remember as well, though Covid – 19 has impacted our lives and the lives of our churches and communities, it cannot keep us from praying and remaining steadfast in our hope and faith. Keep well and I will post any updates to our parish website in the days to come.

May God bless each of you.

Rev. Randy Lockyer (Rector)