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Suspension of liturgical celebrations in the Diocese of Quebec

Friday 13 March 2020

Dear friends,

As we have all been experiencing, the situation regarding COVID-19 is changing by the day. The government of Quebec has put in place a series of aggressive measures aimed at slowing the pace of virus' spread. These include cancelling indoor gatherings of more than 250 people.

Although Anglican churches in our diocese rarely see such numbers, it nevertheless seems prudent to take whatever measures we can to assist in the collective effort to slow the advance of COVID-19. This seems especially wise given that many of our faithful are over the age of 65, one of the groups most at risk of contracting the disease.

Therefore, effective immediately and until further notice, **all public liturgical celebrations in the Diocese of Quebec are suspended.** This includes regular Sunday services and any midweek liturgies. Other church-related gatherings—such as educational groups, annual vestry meetings, Anglican Church Women or guild get-togethers—should also suspend meeting in person during this time. I would also encourage parish corporations to find ways for outside groups using church facilities like parish halls to temporarily make other arrangements.

These measures are being taken out of an abundance of caution and in the interests of the common good, particularly those whose age or health makes them more vulnerable during this pandemic.

One of the ways the catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* describes the church is as “the family of God.” Even though, temporarily, we will not gather as the church in our usual buildings, we nevertheless all remain members of God’s family. We remain the church. I therefore invite you to find other ways to stay connected with your sisters and brothers in Christ during this pandemic. Social distancing need not lead to social isolation.

Even as we pray separately, our prayers join those of all the faithful and the whole communion of saints across time and space. Look in the days ahead for some resources to aid in your prayers during this unusual time, and for further updates. In the meantime, I offer you my prayers and this:

God of the present moment,
God who in Jesus stills the storm
and soothes the frantic heart;
bring us hope and courage
as we wait in uncertainty.
Bring hope that you will make us the equal
of whatever lies ahead.
Bring us courage to endure what cannot be avoided,
for your will is health and wholeness;
you are God, and we need you.

A New Zealand Prayer Book

The Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers OGS
Bishop of Quebec