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Friday 25 February 2021

Dear faithful people of the Diocese of Quebec,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

We can all be forgiven for feeling a bit these days like the Israelites during their 40-year-long trek through the wilderness. Although our pandemic perambulation has only endured 24 months, it feels a lot longer, and it's often hard to tell if we're getting any closer to the promised land of life after COVID-19.

However, we do seem to be collectively moving into a state of learning to live with the coronavirus, and returning to some of our former routines while still exercising caution, especially for the sake of the more vulnerable among us. In the life and work of our churches, that means gathering once again for annual vestry meetings, which are now permitted under public health guidelines.

Because this will be the first annual vestry meeting that most of our congregations will be having for in two years, **annual vestries are asked to approve verified financial statements for 2019 (if not already approved in 2020), for 2020 and 2021.** Even if these are minimal and somewhat incomplete, they are nevertheless essential for the diocese's overall financial recordkeeping. **Annual vestry meetings should take place, and completed annual congregational reports (which can be downloaded at [quebec.anglican.ca/resources](http://quebec.anglican.ca/resources)) be submitted to Church House, no later than April 15.**

Although it is not my intention to convene our diocesan Synod in the coming year, **each congregation is nevertheless requested to choose at their annual vestry least one layperson who will be prepared to attend Synod.** In the unlikely event that Synod is convened this year, those individuals will join a pool of other nominees in their deanery from which Synod delegates will be subsequently elected. Synod Secretary Stephen Kohner explains the process (which was used for the first time before the 2019 diocesan Synod) in detail in the attached letter, and the necessary forms to be completed at the annual vestry meeting are also included. Congregations who did not have a lay member attend the 2019 Synod are also reminded that **their annual vestry meeting should also designate a layperson to represent their congregation on their respective deanery council.**

It would also be helpful if you could inform Director General Marie-Sol Gaudreau (msgaudreau@quebec.anglican.ca) **if there are plans to replace the heating systems in any of your church buildings in the near future**. As of 2024, the Quebec government will forbid the installation of heating systems powered by fossil fuels, such as oil furnaces. If we know of any upcoming replacements of heating systems, we may be able to assist congregations with applications for grants to help purchase buying new, non-fossil-fuel equipment.

The pandemic has been a time of trial in so many ways. I would therefore invite you to spend some time during your annual vestry meeting not simply trying to pick up where you left off. Yes, approve financial statements, choose people to serve in various roles, and discuss infrastructure. But please also consider some of these questions in the light of the experience of the past two years:

- What has COVID-19 taught your congregation about being the church? What insights have you gained? What challenges have you faced?
- How does your congregation see its ministry developing post-COVID? What short- and long-term future do you see for your congregation?
- What dreams might your congregation be dreaming about your ministry in your community? What are your greatest fears? Your greatest hopes?

And discuss these questions with the trust and confidence in God's future, embodied in this beloved prayer:

*O God, you have called your servants  
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,  
by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.  
Give us faith to go forward with good courage, not knowing where we go,  
but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Myers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers  
Bishop of Quebec