



April 2, 2020

## Pastoral Letter to the Lay People of York-Credit Valley

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

Two weeks ago, on the feast of St Patrick, I drafted a letter to you, the people of the York-Credit Valley Episcopal Area. The rapidly evolving circumstances prevented me from sending it at that time, but since then, I have been praying for you, concerned for you, and thanking God for you. Today I am expressing my gratitude for your steadfastness and courage in these uncertain times.

At the time of my first writing—a mere fourteen days, and yet what feels like a lifetime, ago—I commented that we were together entering into new territory in terms of what it means to *be* church.

How quickly that “new territory” has become the “new normal.” I have seen such creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and radical re-imagining in the past weeks as you continue to organise as one body in Christ, even as we remain physically apart. I am amazed, but not surprised, by the variety and diversity by which worship, outreach, and pastoral ministry are continuing in the York-Credit Valley Area and across the Diocese. This is exactly what our faith has always equipped us for—to reach yearning ears and desirous hearts, whether by tried-and-true means or high-tech media solutions. I want to tell you how proud I am of the clergy, staff and lay leaders of our YCV parishes as they have continued to adapt to new expectations and uncertain timelines for parish life.

I have also come to recognize that what feels like new territory for us as the Church is also old, familiar territory. The Church has witnessed social disruption over and over again in its history. While modern institutions scramble to react to the present outbreak, the Church can in fact say, “Been there. Done that.” The Black Death, the Spanish Flu, world wars and financial crashes. The Church has known—and seen a way through—plague and pandemic, depression and recession, war and persecution. What's more, these things are a daily fact for many of our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion, in countries where epidemic, civil war, and systemic poverty are common realities above and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. While these times are distressing and uncertain for us, we have much to be grateful for with every reason to remain confident in God's unwavering, transforming love for us.

And so I encourage you to continue to commit yourselves in support of your parish family. Pray for your clergy and your churchwardens. Continue to make your regular financial offering, as best as you are able.



**Diocese of Toronto**  
Anglican Church of Canada

Remain in touch with members of your church family. Keep the Sabbath by making time and space in your home to worship and pray. Continue to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, opening your heart to God's shaping power during this strange and unsettling time. Know that God will guide us in ways that may be different and may not always be comfortable for us, but that can still bear fruit and glorify God.

This letter comes with my continued prayers and thanksgiving for you. As we approach Holy Week, let us remember that we are a Resurrection people. We follow a God, who suffers along with us, who knows what it is like to be tested, isolated from loved ones, and stripped of all comforts. But beyond the Cross of Good Friday lies the empty tomb of Easter Sunday, the restoration of a hope that endures all suffering, and the promise of a rise to glory and life everlasting.



Blessings for this extraordinary Holy Week,

The Right Reverend Jennifer Andison  
Area Bishop of York-Credit Valley  
Bishop Suffragan of Toronto