

The Right Reverend
ANDREW J. ASBIL

Bishop of Toronto



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Anglican Church of Canada

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To the Clergy and People of the Diocese of Toronto -

Beloved in Christ:

It is an indication of how quickly things are changing regarding the Covid-19 pandemic that we need to update our message of earlier today.

Since this morning, the Ministry of Health of the Province of Ontario has issued directives that recommend “the immediate suspension of all large events and public gatherings of over 250 people.” In response to this, the Provincial House of Bishops has decided that the time has come to suspend public worship in the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario, including the Diocese of Toronto. Please see our Metropolitan’s letter [here](#).

Until further notice, and starting Sunday, March 15, 2020, the College of Bishops is cancelling all corporate worship and all other gatherings in our churches. Ministries of service to marginalized and disadvantaged communities may continue using the utmost care, acting consistent with the Ministry of Health directives. (Those licensees and other outside groups who do not fall under our authority may continue to utilise our spaces as agreed, provided that they too are acting consistent with the Ministry of Health directives.)

We make this decision with a heavy heart, not out of a sense of fear but in confidence that it is the right, safe and caring decision to make for the Church, and for the world, at this time.

Although we cannot gather for corporate worship, it has never been more important that we lift our prayers and praises to a merciful God, and to exercise care and charity for ourselves and our neighbours. Please continue in your personal devotions, privately and with your family, particularly on Sunday. Pray for this situation and for those most affected by it, especially the sick. Check in by telephone or email with others, particularly the isolated and vulnerable. I urge the clergy of the Diocese to provide pastoral care and support as best as you are able, using the guidelines already shared earlier.

Finally, we urge the clergy and lay leaders to facilitate worship as much as you are able using the technology available to you. There are many fine worship resources available online, and all of our liturgical texts are posted on [the Anglican Church of Canada website](#). Please help every Anglican to feel connected to their parish family. I am planning to offer a short online service on Sunday morning; a link will be provided soon.

This has been a remarkable time in our life together. I am inspired by the caring response of all who are engaged in ministry at this time. Please continue to work to uphold the Light of Christ as we journey through this Season of Lent.

The Provincial House of Bishops and the College of Bishops for the Diocese of Toronto are continually monitoring the situation and will be communicating with you frequently in the days to come. Please keep us in your prayers.

Yours in Christ,

The Right Reverend Andrew J. Asbil
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MISSION: To worship God and proclaim Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and to embody—in word and action—God's reconciling love, justice, compassion and liberation—through which knowledge of God's reign is extended.