



Episcopal Office, Diocese of Ottawa
Anglican Church of Canada

Bureau épiscopal, Diocèse d'Ottawa
L'Église anglicane du Canada

The Right Reverend John H. Chapman
Bishop of Ottawa

Son Excellence Monseigneur John H. Chapman
Évêque d'Ottawa

*With God's grace, the mission of our ministries
is to enable people to know Jesus Christ,
to live and share the good news,
to grow in faith, and to serve God's world.*

March 16, 2020

A Pastoral Letter from the Bishop

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. John 5:14-16

My friends in Christ, if ever there was a time for us to understand who we are as Christians, who we are called to be, what we are called to do, and what we are called to witness, it is now. Of course, there have been many times throughout our modern history where this could be said, but it needs to also be said that “these days” are indeed one of those times.

We are living in a time that is filled with fear; some appropriate, and some paralyzing, in unhealthy ways. Our global community is wondering what is happening and what will happen both to our health as individuals and communities and as an economic community. We wonder as Canadians; we wonder as people of the Province of Ontario, and as people of this diocese of Ottawa.

But, we are people of the Light! It is incumbent upon us to allow that light, the light of Jesus, to shine brightly in the communities in which we live, work, and witness. Gathering in Church buildings is not what makes us Christians. Rather, it is what we see, what we do, and how we speak that makes us followers of Jesus.

It is time to think of our neighbours.

Are we phoning our elderly who may not have the benefit of technology, email, text or Facebook? I can only imagine the loneliness that is experienced by our elderly caught in a web of insecurity and uncertainty. The phone is an amazing instrument that allows us to speak with another, pray with another, laugh, cry and otherwise engage. The same could be said for our sick, our parents home with young children, and those we know who suffer from anxiety and discomfort.

It is time to rethink, at least for a time, how we pray as communities of faith.

Some of our clergy are “broadcasting” a time of prayer and preaching through Facebook. Others, from smaller communities, are using conference calls on Sunday morning as a means to share in prayer. And yet others are coming up with different creative solutions. In any event, if we have defined ourselves by where we traditionally pray or come together, then somehow, we have overlooked much of our sacred scriptures. The people of God have wandered for centuries. The people of God have enjoyed wonderful buildings like the temple of Jerusalem and watched it destroyed and then worshiped in small hovels built of mud and straw. The people of God have, throughout history, arrived in places where there was nowhere to call home. There is no containing the Light that is Jesus, it shines in every heaven and under every rock. It shines in every home and every heart. You are the Light my Christian brothers and sisters.

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Page 2 of 2

It is time to rethink how we care for our sick, and for those who have died, and for those who mourn.

For our sick: communicating with the sick, their families and friends is critical. Providing food – an age-old Anglican tradition is most appropriate.

For those who have died, it seems appropriate, at least for the time being, for clergy to gather with immediate family only, to share in the prayers of the dead which point to the Light of the resurrection. More public gatherings of remembrance and celebrations of life could be held at a later time.

It is time to rethink how we manage our finances that fund and support our various communities and ministries.

Fortunately, we live in a time of live technology. Most of what needs to happen, financially speaking, can be managed from home and on the internet. It is relatively easy for us to continue to honour our gifts and pay our bills. However, if you have questions or concerns, remember that Sanjay Grover, and Bill Gilbert, and Sandra Purdy can always be contacted through the Synod Office by phone or email.

Our churches are not closed!

Our churches are more vibrant, alive, brash, responsive, and hopeful than ever. At every turn I am hearing of new ways in which we offer support and care for the people of God. There is no detouring our Call. While we are unable to gather together in our church buildings, we are not “closed.” Christians are called to do all that we can as lovers of Christ and members of our civil society to address our dilemma with hope and grace. It is what we are called to do. It is what we are called to be. But unfortunately, not everyone is hearing the call to service. Some think that we are “out of business” until the virus passes. Not true. In these times, all the baptised are called to service and to prayer.

May God continue to bless the parishes, community ministries, and individuals of this wonderful diocese of Ottawa as we show the world that Jesus lives, and that the mission of God will thrive! I remain,

Yours in the Faith of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ John Ottawa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. John H. Chapman
9th Bishop of Ottawa

JHC/hnp

PS – I will continue to work in consultation with the Provincial House of Bishops of Ontario as we find our way through these difficult days.