



# CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL OTTAWA

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## THE DEAN'S CHARGE TO VESTRY 2021

Grace and peace to you, people of Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa.

On this Second Sunday in Lent, we will gather virtually to worship and then hold our annual Vestry meeting. Although we are not able to be together in person, we are held in the bonds of our faith, the strength of our community, and the abiding love of God. Powerful words from scripture ground us, accompany us, and give us hope, even in the midst of uncertain days.

The Gospel of Mark speaks to our experience of this past year:

*"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." (Mark 8:34-35)*

This past year we have all learned something about denying ourselves, taking up our cross, who we are truly following, and for what sake we are living. A mere two weeks after last year's Vestry, life, as we knew it, changed.

Your beloved dean was elected as our new bishop, and one day later, the doors of this cathedral and all the other churches in our diocese were closed, worship and gatherings suspended, as the reality of COVID-19 landed. Everyone thought we would be back for Easter, but that was not to be. Bishop Shane's consecration was held in a whole new way, poignant and even more meaningful, given the circumstances. Archdeacon Pat Johnston, the clergy, staff, musicians, wardens, Cathedral Council, and the Pandemic Task Force led without fear and with vision, keeping everyone connected, providing meaningful worship, and choosing a new dean.

On the first Sunday in September, with trepidation and hope, we began a new journey together as we gathered in person for the first time. New forms of worship and ways of sharing it were developed. Our new leadership team bonded, and our forecourt became a place of greeting and community-building. Bishop Shane was welcomed in his new role at Thanksgiving; the Dean's installation was held on Christ the King; and Christmas was celebrated as fully as possible, both beautiful and heartbreaking at the same time. Then we were locked down. Keeping our eyes and our hearts open, we began partnering with St. Luke's for worship. And here we are, having come full circle to Vestry once more.

During this tumultuous year, you have been unfailingly supportive and faithful, encouraging and generous. Your commitment to the cathedral's ministries is extraordinary. Your dedication to one another and to living out God's mission is inspiring. Your warm welcome is deeply appreciated, and your trust is humbling. Despite the dark days of the pandemic, God's light continues to shine through our cathedral.

As we move forward together, hear the words from Genesis:

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." (Genesis 17:1a, 5-7, 15-16)*

This covenant marks a new phase, symbolized by a change of name for both Abraham and Sarah. Their journey so far has led them a long way into trusting God, but now they are to see that God is to be trusted far beyond their wildest dreams.

We are a covenant people. God is invested in our well-being and believes in us, from generation to generation. God's trust is placed in us, and God's power, 'working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.'

Continuing to be faithful stewards of all that God has graced us with, Phase II of the Cathedral Hill Project, the construction of a retirement residence by the Reichman Group, will soon begin. The first step is the excavation and restoration of the east wall of the cathedral below grade, as well as the adjoining space above. Thank you for your generous financial support in 2020 which has provided the funds necessary for this restoration work. To ensure that the sacred space and creative ministries of our cathedral continue for generations, our Endowment Program will be further lifted up and developed, along with our communications, telling our remarkable story of witness and ministry.

As we begin to see signs of moving out from under the pandemic cloud, we become more aware that life has gone in spite of it all. People we have loved have died, babies have been born, jobs have ended and begun, relationships have changed, and all of us have grown older. We, like Abraham and Sarah, have been tried and tested and renamed – as our community is not the same as it was this time last year. We will need to be intentional about reconnecting and making new connections; gathering and growing our ministries; renewing and rebuilding our music programs; investing in our partnerships and expanding new ones. As the cathedral, it is also our unique role to lead our diocese into new ways of being God's people in the world; to support our bishop, diocesan staff, our community ministries and parishes; to be a place of worship, of gathering, and of mentoring. God has entrusted us with much, and what a delight it will be to fully embrace the challenges and opportunities which lie before us!

It is with a grateful heart that I serve as your Dean. Along with Canons Doug and Hilary, Josephine, James, Andrew, Nick, Natasha, Amanda, the wardens, associate clergy, choristers, leaders and members of all our many guilds, committees, groups and teams, and each one of you, we are blessed to be God's people in this place. May we continue to trust the Creator's love, walk in Christ's way, and serve in the Spirit's power.

The Very Reverend Beth Bretzlaff  
Dean of Ottawa