



The Diocese of Huron

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

The Right Reverend Todd Townshend, Th.D.
Bishop of Huron

A Christmas Message for 2021

Grace and peace to you as we transition from this holy season of Advent to the celebration of the Christmas season.

I'm Todd Townshend, Bishop of Huron.

After the past few months, when we've been able to breathe a little easier and move around a little more freely, we are now in a more anxious time again with the emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

It is time to be very, very cautious again but things are different now than they were one year ago when we had to close churches. We have the vaccines, we have learned more about the virus and the variants of it, we have done well to adapt our practices and protocols to keep our communities as safe as possible. We have maintained great care in protecting one another with physical spacing, careful masking, and increased ventilation.

This week I sent out the message which asked each parish community to make their own decision about whether, or not, to offer in-person worship over this time. Together the clergy and churchwardens will make the right decision for their own context, strictly following the diocesan protocols and the advice of local health authorities. I am very

thankful to those leaders who have given so much already to lead us through this time.

Some parishes have already decided to not offer in-person worship this weekend, and I support them in their decision. I am also aware that some parishes wish to continue to worship in-person using our guidelines, and I support their decision. Perhaps most importantly, I know that individuals and families will decide for themselves whether to attend in-person services or to stay home and worship together online or in another way. I pray for every one of you as you each make the best choice for you, especially if you're struggling to make that choice.

For those who are staying home and who may not have an online service to attend, I will be joining with the people of our Cathedral on Christmas Eve at 7:00. You will find a link to the livestream at the St. Paul's Cathedral website stpaulscathedral.on.ca or on their YouTube channel.

As I've said many times over the past year, through the miracle of the COVID vaccinations and the wonderful service of health care providers, and others, we will eventually see the danger of this pandemic subside. If you're not already fully vaccinated, I encourage you to do so. It's the single most important thing we can do.

The other most important thing we can do is to keep faith. To continually lift our eyes to the horizon where we will experience God coming to us. There is a great and everlasting promise made in this season. God has promised to always be with us - and not just in some fuzzy, conceptual way, but in the flesh. In the gritty realities of life. In our joys and in our sorrows.

This is the season that celebrates the arrival of Jesus, the Word of God, the son of God. The way that he came into the world, the place, the people, the circumstances – it is all incredibly beautiful. This event is almost inconceivable: God with us. God With Us. Not God against us, not God apart from us, not God at a distance from us. No. God for us, God becoming one of us, God reaching out to us and embracing us. Nothing can separate you from that, in Christ Jesus. Nothing.

This is what lifts me up in times of trouble, trusting that nothing can separate us from the love of God and that God will be God long after all the troubles of this world have come and gone.

So, we turn our eyes to Mary and Joseph as they open their hands to receive Him. The gift that is beyond every gift, Jesus Christ our Lord.

May we do the same and, thereby, know every blessing of the season.