

March 23, 2020

***A letter to the clergy of the diocese of islands and inlets:***

Dear friends,

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*God of the desert and God of the garden,  
your son went into the wilderness.  
And there he sat.  
And there he prayed.  
And there he dreamed  
of a life more abundant for others.  
As we root down for an uncertain time,  
and consider how we've grown apart,  
may we rest as needed and sprout new thoughts  
for those less able to rest.  
Amen. —Corrymeela*

As we continue on the journey through an unprecedented time and as the global situation is continuing to evolve at a rapid pace, I write to you in thanks for your understanding as we work with our communities to flatten the curve. Please know I have been intentionally praying for you during all the decisions being made around the diocese about being church during these times.

Thank you for your calm, decisive leadership in your parishes. We are in a *wilderness time* as we journey together. We have symbolically extended our Lenten time because of Covid-19. We look forward with hope to the end of this wilderness experience and a time we will gather once again and celebrate in our villages, municipalities and cities.

One of the gifts that the church brings is that of community. At this time, we are being asked to reimagine what being a community means for us. We are the church despite not being able to gather in our buildings. Interestingly, as I have travelled the diocese these past six years, one of the main social issues I hear about in many of our communities is social isolation. We are all experiencing what social isolation feels like right now. It is important for us to pay attention to what we learn and to consider how we might put that learning to good use after this experience has passed.

Our primary work currently is the pastoral oversight of those in our communities. We need to be in community in a new way during this time. Community is our strength and we are being asked: *what does community look like during a time of wide-spread social isolation?* I believe, because of our journey over the last number of years, that we have the capacity to answer this question. We should be assessing our time on social media, as it's not always the healthiest way to be in contact with others. The need to check-

in and help those in social isolation must primarily be *old school*, like phone calls. Pray with one another and speak on an ongoing basis. Ask if there are needs and arrange for groceries, medication or other items. Please remember our teachings about the use of emails from our Safe Church training. Using Zoom, Skype, FaceTime and the telephone lets us continue to speak, pray and worship in this new world we are living together. Ask each other and our neighbours what they are using for worship resources and share those responses with others.

We together have the tools to move forward even though this has not been of our making. Let us remind ourselves that we together are greater than the sum of our parts. We together can face this situation and come through as better people and a better church. We are now in a place where we have become an emerging community. We have said many times in the past few years that we must do church differently, and now we have been forced to look at church and community being different on a much faster timeline than we anticipated.

I have been in touch with The Rev. Dr. Eileen Scully, National Church Director of Faith, Worship, and Ministry. I have asked her what conversations are happening with respect to digital celebrations of the Eucharist. I have informed her that these conversations have begun here in BC and am reluctant for our diocese to get ahead of any conversations that might be happening nationally. I will let you know further details as soon as I have some to share. It is important that on issues of faith worship and ministry we move alongside the church nationally. We may not be able to experience God in the Eucharist at this time, but we can still very much engage the creator in the sacrament of Creation.

Before the Covid-19 crisis, I had tasked all parishes with studying the book *Watershed Discipleship* over the Lenten season. As it happens, this book focuses deeply on the care of and engagement with Creation. I hope that you will find ways to discuss this book, perhaps using Zoom or Facebook, and encourage people to go safely outside alone or with their family and explore the local watersheds; watch the work of God's hand in their local communities, and to learn that *community* doesn't just mean a group of humans, but also one's relationship with the trees and grass and creeks that sustain us.

Marcia and I have been in California on vacation and decided to cut our trip short and return. We have placed ourselves into quarantine for 14 days which will take us to the end of the month. If you need to speak to me, please contact Tara and we can set up a Zoom meeting or telephone conversation.

I give thanks for the leadership of the Ven. Barry Foster as commissary and the staff in our synod office. Over the last few weeks, Barry has been in conversations with the provincial House of Bishops and participated in a conference call with the premier. I support and give thanks for his calm leadership and decision making during this time.

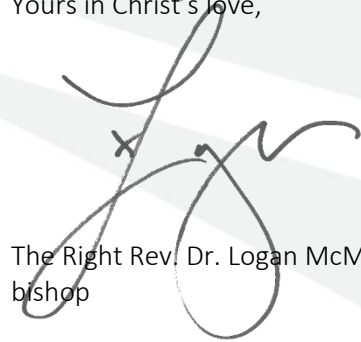
One of the great joys for me as bishop is being with you in your congregations. I have very much enjoyed the times of worship, teachings and fellowship we have shared together. I am going to miss that when I retire, and I was looking forward to the planned parish visits over the next few weeks. Like you, I am saddened that we have needed to take the measures such as postponing events and our worship times, especially as we move towards and through the Easter Season. I am also especially saddened to postpone the ordinations, and I hope you will keep all five ordinands in your prayers as they re-enter into a time of waiting and reflection.

As we come to terms with the fact that this new reality may be extended for some time, I have sent a letter to the metropolitan, Archbishop Melissa Skelton, and asked her to amend my retirement date until

later in the year. As much as I have been looking forward to the end of April, I do not think we need any more changes right now. As soon as I have received +Melissa's response, we will be in touch to inform you of the diocesan plan moving forward.

Continue to support one another in faith. Be gentle in all things. Care for those most vulnerable. May the God who brings us to a future where faith, hope and love define our community, bless you now and always.

Yours in Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Logan', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

The Right Rev. Dr. Logan McMenamie  
bishop