



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we come to the end of another week in this unprecedented season of the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, I invite you now to turn your attention, deeply and fully, to this coming Week of Weeks. After an unparalleled Lent, the Easter encounter that we long for is just around the corner. This Sunday, the Sunday of the Passion, concentrates our minds and spirits on the journey of Jesus in the last few days of his earthly life, and we will travel with him through the events of his passion, his trial and unjust conviction, his tortuous crucifixion, his entombment, and his glorious resurrection. We are called to step into this drama as fully as we are able. And we take with us the fear, uncertainty, unrest and isolation that comes with living in this time of pandemic. Our present reality can't help but shape the way we experience the story of our salvation.

How we “do” Holy Week in 2020 will be different than we have ever experienced. It will require new depths of creativity and intentionality. It will likely be even more exhausting than a regular cycle of the familiar services. But I invite you to lean on each other and to share your resources, both liturgical and pastoral. There is no need for every parish to provide for every moment of worship as if this will be a “normal” Holy Week. Regular services will be [livestreamed from St James Cathedral](#) and I encourage you to make these links available to your people. I especially encourage the clergy of the Diocese to join me for the Tuesday morning Blessing of Oils service, when we will renew our ordination vows “together”, while necessarily apart. It would be meaningful for me to know that you have all tuned in.

In that same vein, we must persist in reaching out to our parishioners and facilitate community and connections as best as we are able. To do so means

carefully monitoring the energy levels and abilities of both yourself and your leaders. I am conscious that we are getting tired. Every new announcement of possible extensions on gathering restrictions can lead to discouragement, and we know that the wave of infection, sickness and fatality will worsen in the next while. We all need to take care of ourselves and to stay healthy and well in order for ministry to continue in the long term – both into and beyond the current emergency.

To that end, think about what you can scale back this coming week to enter more fully into your own prayer life and spiritual wellbeing. It has long been a discipline of mine to eliminate regular meetings and “business as usual” during Holy Week. Perhaps this year the novelty of doing things differently will allow you to cut back not just on those things that we are restricted from doing, but also some other things that you will discover are unnecessary. Less is more. Be kind to yourselves. Slow down. Christ died for you.

To that end, I will not be sending out any communication next week, apart from the Easter video that I have already filmed. I too would like to spend some time in Holy Week in this unique environment of imposed quiet, to reflect deeply, pray fervently, and enter once again into the story of the Passion of our Lord, to journey with him to his death upon a cruel cross, and then to marvel in abject wonder and gratitude upon the triumph of his glorious resurrection. Join me.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Andrew Toronto". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil
Bishop of Toronto