



The Diocese of Huron

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

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

March 24, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

A little less than two weeks ago, we decided not to gather for public worship in our churches and to stay home whenever possible. We did this to protect the most vulnerable among us. That has been a sacrifice but I believe it is helping. It has also generated new growth in our beautiful network of care and communication—you are serving in unprecedented ways. Thank you to everyone who has responded in love.

In that March 13 letter I promised to give you an update on our worship life before April 8. I am able to do that today. We must extend the suspension of all gatherings (according to current guidelines) until further notice. This, unfortunately, applies to the most central celebrations of the year—Easter. The Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario have been meeting electronically and we made some important decisions together about our common worship life. I fully support the following statement from our Ontario bishops:

“One of the realities for the Church living through this pandemic is our inability to physically gather as community for worship and mutual support. The Eucharistic Feast which we are used to celebrating week after week has been interrupted. On-line celebrations, prayers, bible studies, and devotions offered by parishes have been keeping us connected in a virtual way and we are grateful for these inspired links. This temporary absence from one another tests our very nature as a living body and reminds us of our deep longing to be together. We now find ourselves in a time of Eucharistic Fast rather than Feast.

*Therefore, the bishops of our province have agreed together that our virtual worship through Holy Week and the season of Easter, or until such time that we can gather in community together, will not include the liturgy of the Eucharist. Sacramental celebrations are the work of the whole People of God and require a gathering of people who can be physically present to one another. That is impossible for most of us at this time. The Great Three Days of Easter, and through the fifty days of the season, we will be **fasting from the Eucharist but feasting on the Word**. We believe that the Risen One, the Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is present and active with us as we hear and receive him in the word of the scriptures, in that word interpreted and proclaimed in preaching, and in the word inwardly digested, by faith, in each person.”*

In Huron, for clarity, I am also asking our priests to join with me in this Eucharistic fast, in an act of solidarity. (Exceptions to this may be made in order to provide a last Eucharistic meal to the dying.)

In the coming days, we will be preparing worship resources for the Holy Week celebrations—so that anyone who does not have access to virtual worship may participate from home by presiding over their own individual or family prayers. These will include video resources from across the diocese and other electronic options for those who have access. I will add my voice to these resources so that we can stay connected in the gospel and in prayer. In addition to these resources, churches may choose to offer their own virtual resources and events in order to serve your local community well.

For now, we can share a common time and a common rite, we just cannot share a common space. This is temporary—I hope that we will be able to gather in small groups before very long. What a celebration that will be!

Please watch the Diocesan website diohuron.org for updates and resources. Also, the Reverend Dr. Eileen Scully, Director of Faith, Worship and Ministry beautifully puts this time into context in the following reflection which may be found [here](#).

Grace and peace to all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Townshend". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol to the left of the name.

The Right Reverend Todd Townshend
Bishop of Huron