



TO BE READ IN ALL THE CHURCHES OF THE DIOCESE OF BRANDON

Put on, then, garments that suit God's chosen and beloved people: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgiving, if any of you has cause for complaint: you must forgive as the Lord forgave you. Finally, to bind everything together and complete the whole, there must be love. Let Christ's peace be arbiter in your decisions, the peace to which you were called as members of a single body. Always be thankful. Let the gospel of Christ dwell among you in all its richness; teach and instruct one another with all the wisdom it gives you. With psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, sing from the heart in gratitude to God. Let every word and action, everything you do, be in the name of the Lord Jesus, and give thanks through him to God the Father.

Colossians 3.12-17

March 15, 2020

Dear friends in Christ

The information that is being shared across the Province of Manitoba is developing fast and I wanted to communicate the next steps in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have been fielding calls and inquiries this past week, and along with the senior leadership of the diocese, and in consultation with the other bishops in the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land, we are fashioning a response consistent with the information forwarded to us by the various provincial health authorities. Large gatherings, conventions and meetings of more than 250 people are being cancelled around the area. Smaller gatherings, such as our congregational worship services, are still happening, but the risk to seniors, the immuno-compromised and those with underlying conditions remains.

I have been taking as guidance the advice of the province to schools. As the province has announced that schools in Manitoba will close March 23 for three weeks, I believe it prudent to follow their lead, and that as bishop I am suspending all public worship in the Diocese of Brandon from Monday, March 16 through Sunday, March 29 inclusive. We will re-evaluate the situation before Palm Sunday. Restoration of services will occur as soon as it can safely be accomplished.

The Diocesan Office will still operate, as we are a small staff and our offices are separated from one another. Business functions of the Diocese of Brandon will continue uninterrupted.

Public worship may be suspended, but ministry will continue. Visitation to the sick and the suffering may continue as long as clergy themselves are healthy and adhere to all precautions necessary according to health guidelines. Use of the internet, Facebook, Instagram and other platforms will be encouraged so that we can still gather together remotely to hear the word of God, to pray for the

good of the world and the preservation of those in danger and for the relief of suffering. Please watch the Diocese of Brandon Facebook page for webcast services and further announcements. We will also publish various prayer resources that will be helpful to those who wish to lead devotions and time of prayer privately or in families.

Finally, let us remember to be firm in our faith, and always ready to give an account for the hope that is in us. Pray unceasingly for the doctors, the scientists, the front-line health workers and for all those who have had fear and despair made real to them through this time. May the Lord make us his own calming, compassionate and loving presence in our communities.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "William G. Cliff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning and a horizontal line underneath.

The Rt. Revd William G. Cliff
VII Bishop of Brandon