

## Bishop's Pastoral Letter to Vestries, 2019

*to be read or circulated on the Sunday of the parish's annual vestry meeting*



**Diocese of Toronto**

Anglican Church of Canada

To our Clergy, Churchwardens and Parishioners

Beloved in Christ, peace and grace be with you.

This will be the first time, in almost 30 years, that I am not chairing a vestry meeting. I am one of those people who actually enjoys vestry; poring over audited financial statements, ministry reports, marking important milestones in the parish, celebrating the incredible contributions of our lay leaders (without whom very little would happen). Deeper than that, a good meeting names the anxiety we have in trying to balance the needs of the parish while trusting deeply in the hope that God will guide, provide and inspire us to deepen our faith, try new ideas and be creative in our endeavour to serve the mission of God. The vestry meeting is one moment in the year when a parish has the opportunity to look back and then to look forward. I am joined by the Area Bishops in assuring you of our prayers as you gather for your annual meeting. We also extend our deepest gratitude for all who have served so faithfully as wardens, committee members, teachers, greeters and leaders who make known the love of Christ through their offering of time, talent and treasure. If you are taking on a new role this year, a particular word of encouragement to you.

Over the last several years it has been our practice to invite each parish to consider a vestry motion that addresses issues of poverty and social action. In view of the drastically rising economic inequity in our province, this year's vestry motion asks your parish to consider *Standing in Solidarity*, by making a commitment to protect all who are living in poverty, through direct local and parish outreach and through meaningful advocacy.

On January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019 I was formally seated as the 12<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Toronto. The journey to that moment has been heart-warming, moving and humbling. I am heartened by your words of encouragement, humbled by your support, and moved by your desire to row and to pedal! I will be forever indebted to Archbishop Colin for his encouragement and support. I am invigorated by the passion and faithfulness of our Area Bishops Peter, Riscylla, Kevin and Jenny as we step in together to write a new chapter as the College of Bishops. I am impressed beyond words by the dedication of our staff in the Diocesan office, and by the creative ways that ministry is happening every day in our parishes and centers of ministry around the Diocese.

I am thrilled to be on the road Sunday by Sunday visiting parishes, celebrating worship and getting to know you. I am finding my bearings with each of the committees, councils and task forces of the Diocese. I will be spending time with the clergy in each Deanery to glean the wisdom of those who lead in each community. In the first week of May I would like to meet with the laity of the Diocese through 5 scheduled Town Hall meetings (details will be posted on the Diocesan website). Each gathering gives us time to listen to each other, articulate our hopes for ministry, and catch a glimpse of what might be. I hope that you will join me.

May God bless you as you meet for Vestry.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Andrew J. Asbil  
Bishop of Toronto