



Bishop John's Address to the Diocese of New Westminster, February 28, 2021

Welcome and Thanks

Well here we are once again. A liturgy that is important in our Anglican tradition and historical in the life of this diocese and yet so few of us can be here in person at our cathedral. There is a sadness to that. I really had hoped that at this point in the process connected to this pandemic I would be able to see you all, be with you all; see your faces, hear your voices, sing together, worship together, pray together, invite the presence of the Holy Spirit together, laugh together. There is so much that is missing today: between my family, my friends, fellow clergy, colleagues, parishioners of all the parishes of this great diocese, I wish that we could be together to share in this moment.

But as I thought about this more, I realized that this cannot be the focus, not the scarcity, but the abundance, for I am so appreciative of your prayers and your presence on this livestream. So many of you have offered good wishes, support, kind words and encouragement of God's grace and blessing at this time. And I am so grateful. I still wish we could share this time together but I know so many are walking this new path with me.

My commitment from here is that I will be working very hard to be with you in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. If at first it is on Zoom, livestream or other online technology, hopefully soon it will be in person, but I will be making much effort to come to be with you. I will be contacting clergy and inviting them into conversations about our faith, our diocese, our parishes, our priorities. I have started by meeting with archdeacons and regional deans, but this will expand. I want to join you in your parish worship or come to your meetings or coffee hours or events or find ways that we can connect. These times of connection will be so important for me in my ministry as I serve as your bishop. The life

of the parishes is central to the life of the diocese and I want to support, encourage, strengthen and lead to greater development the parishes of our diocese.

We live in an incredible place to do ministry. We have so many gifted clergy and lay leaders. We have beautiful and transformational worship of great variety. There is inspirational ministry that takes place every day of the week, even in a pandemic. There is rich teaching, learning, adult education, children's education, youth learning and growth. There is beautiful pastoral care and other incredible ministry that allows for healing, grief, compassion and hope. There is new understanding that we must care more attentively to the ways that we might live on this planet with greater care, and also how we treat one another on our daily walk. Together we will seek new ways of growing the churches and other places of ministry, growing in faith, growing in trust that the Holy Spirit is leading us to new places and new heights.

Together we are the Diocese of New Westminster. And as I begin my time as the bishop of this amazing diocese, I ask for your ongoing prayers, encouragement and insight. I ask for your hard work and commitment to moving forward in a complicated world, but a world eager to know more about God's grace, new vision and new hope. In this time of Lent and this time of pandemic I urge you to stay focussed on what we are all about: communities transformed by the gospel of Christ. A Gospel of new life that changes us to view the world with God's eyes and God's love and God's peace.

May we live that out together.