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Eucharistic feasting, fasting or famine?

Canadian Anglican leaders offer a diverse set of responses and recommendations about Holy Eucharist in the time of COVID-19

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

With all public worship suspended in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, clergy have faced the challenge of how

to conduct worship. Perhaps the biggest point of debate: the question of how—or whether—to celebrate the Eucharist.

Anglican bishops across Canada have tended towards two main responses. One

is the idea of holding a “virtual Eucharist” online based on the Christian tradition of Spiritual Communion, in which individuals unable to physically receive the bread and wine may receive Christ through their desire for spiritual union. The other is the idea of a eucharistic fast. Many church leaders are currently

offering spiritual guidance by livestreaming worship and prayer online. In a March 23 essay in which the Rev. Eileen Scully, director of Faith, Worship and Ministry, reflects about decisions made by some bishops to hold eucharistic fasts, Scully suggests that the Eucharist is a
See PRIMATE, p. 8



Bracing for coronavirus impact in Burundi

Since mid-March, Village Health Works, a Primate's World Relief and Development Fund partner which operates clinics in Burundi, has been preparing for the arrival of COVID-19. In addition to making its own hand sanitizer and procuring thousands of gloves and N95 masks, the organization has engaged a local sewing collective to make cloth masks. As of press time, the collective was making more than 100 masks a day for community members and Village Health Works's non-medical staff. In this composite image, a member of the sewing collective sews a mask and Village Health Works physician Dr. Aime Nzambimana models one.

PHOTOS: LARA MEGUID

Dioceses announce millions in aid for cash-strapped parishes

Joelle Kidd, Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITERS

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit church finances from a number of directions at once. Restrictions on public gatherings have meant an end—for now, at least—to traditional collection-plate offerings. Falling stock markets have cut the investment income of both parishes and other levels of church organization, and of parishioners themselves; their reduced investment income, combined with a dramatic spike in unemployment, has eaten into the ability of many parishioners to give. Meanwhile, many parishes have also lost rental income with the shutdown of businesses and other groups that use their space.

In response, some dioceses have taken steps intended to help struggling parishes. The following is a sampling of measures of which the *Journal* was aware as of press time.

Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

An aid package estimated at \$1.3 million, including:

- The waiving of parish allotment payments for March, April and May
- Payment by the diocese of all payroll costs of all stipendiary clergy in April and May. (Parishes that have \$500,000 or more in the Diocesan Consolidated Trust or other investments will be required to repay the diocese)
- Authorizing the management team and two members of diocesan council to

make decisions regarding requests from parishes whose needs are not addressed by the above measures. This authority is to end Sept. 1, 2020, unless

another date is determined by the diocesan council

New Westminster

A roughly \$2-million aid package including:

- Suspension of assessment payments from April 1-Aug. 31 for all parishes
- Payment by the diocese of the salaries of all stipendiary clergy through to the end of May (excepting parishes with more than \$750,000 in the Diocesan Consolidated Trust Fund or other investment funds)
- Allowing parishes to withdraw up to 20% of their capital in the diocese's Consolidated Trust Fund to pay their operational expenses

Central Newfoundland:

- A “time of jubilee,” allowing parishes to skip remit assessments to the diocese in April, May and June
- The diocese was planning a time of jubilee prior to COVID-19
- The jubilee period also focuses on foundational ideas from the Book of Acts and includes prayer, visioning and parish engagement

Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador:

- Offering a direct payment subsidy for employees of the diocese for the four months following April 1
- Allowing parishes to make emergency withdrawals from the diocese's Anglican Joint Investment Trust

Toronto

An estimated \$3.6-million aid package with:

- A “time of jubilee” for parishes through April and May, in which they will not be required to pay allotments to the diocese, or pay clergy stipends, housing and other benefits

Niagara:

- Making parish contributions towards diocesan mission and ministry assessments voluntary as long as worship services in the diocese are suspended
- Offering interest-free loans of up to \$10,000 to parishes
- Waiving interest charges to parishes on outstanding accounts (payroll, insurance or assessment costs) and old debts
- Creation of a new fund to help parishes facing severe financial difficulties ■

Pandemic takes centre stage for Global Relations

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

Like other ministries of General Synod, Global Relations has seen its plans for 2020 upended by the spread of COVID-19 across Canada and around the world.

“The pandemic has increasingly become the focus of Global Relations conversations and our meetings with colleagues and partners,” director Andrea Mann told the *Journal*.

As this story headed to press, Global Relations was in the early stages of gathering information on how the pandemic was affecting some of its ongoing work, such as working to end human trafficking or addressing exploitation of migrant workers.

At a recent meeting of the Anglican Working Group on Migration, “it was clearly evident the global pandemic has galvanized Anglicans worldwide into action in support of the needs of [the] most vulnerable and marginalized,” Mann said.

In many parts of the world, she noted, there is a “real fear” that oppressive states will use the pandemic to increase their power to monitor, arrest and detain people “in ways that do not comply with their human rights” or that do not ensure safe conditions.

The economic dislocation that has accompanied the pandemic is also finding



▲ **In the Gaza Strip, Palestinian children wear protective face masks as a preventive measure against the spread of the novel coronavirus on March 23.**

PHOTO: ABED RAHIM KHATIB/SHUTTERSTOCK

expression in the relationship between the Anglican Church of Canada and partners in other countries. The latter have made appeals to the church to “continue to consider them as we raise funds” for their ministries, Mann said.

“Their prayer to us is that we just continue to pray and to continue to consider the needs of the widest communion possible.”

The Episcopal diocese of Jerusalem offers an example of how COVID-19 has affected the church’s international partners.

Many Anglican churches and schools in the diocese were closed due to lockdown measures, which have included the closing

off of the entire Bethlehem area by Israeli authorities. In Jerusalem, the diocese had to close St. George’s School because so many of its teachers and staff come from Bethlehem.

The diocese also partially closed its Princess Basma Centre, which provides services for children with disabilities in Palestine—though children’s rehabilitation, special needs and mothers’ classes continued. Travel restrictions led to cancellation of classes at St. George’s Guesthouse and St. George’s College.

In a March 11 letter to global partners, Archbishop Suheil Dawani said that the decreasing number of pilgrims had placed “a huge burden on poorer families.” The downturn has been especially hard for those living in the Bethlehem area, where the economy is “largely dependent upon the pilgrim ministry, which has ground to a halt: The Church of the Nativity is closed, hotels are empty, and the normally busy market streets are now barren.”

Many church-affiliated organizations have moved activities online. Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, a member of the Anglican Communion Refugee and Migrant Network, set up a website to monitor the situations of migrant workers in Asia during the pandemic at apmigrants.org/covid19. As of press time, virtual pilgrimages were being encouraged for Jerusalem Sunday on May 24. ■

Landmark agreement in Sask.

Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Ukrainian Catholics pledge joint worship, ministry

Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Ukrainian Catholics across the civil province of Saskatchewan can expect to be worshipping and ministering together in a wide range of new ways after the recent signing of an ecumenical covenant.

The LAURC Covenant, signed by the heads of 10 dioceses and other church bodies of these four denominations in Saskatchewan, and released April 2, pledges them to shared life together under five broad headings: prayer, study, action, social life and ecumenical leadership. They commit to six practices, including an annual “service of reconciliation” with participants from all churches; joint justice-related initiatives; and meetings with Indigenous elders and communities aimed at responding to the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The agreement also encourages churches to consider a list of 23 other ways they might cooperate, ranging from shared services to clergy swaps, prison ministry, chaplaincy and evangelism.

The Rev. Scott Sharman, the Anglican Church of Canada’s animator for ecumenical and interfaith relations, said the covenant was possibly the only one of its kind and might serve as an example for others to follow.

“As far as I am aware, nothing quite like it—in terms of the range of different churches involved, the geographical scope, and the extent of cooperation and commitment it includes—exists anywhere else in the world,” he said.

“I believe it puts forward a model which could be followed elsewhere in Canada, and, God willing, could inspire fresh ecumenical inspiration and energy.”

Michael Hawkins, bishop of the diocese of Saskatchewan (which covers, roughly, the northern half of the civil province), and one of the covenant’s signatories, says the covenant is “in part the fruit of a long history of ecumenism in Saskatchewan and of the extraordinary good will, support, honesty and friendship that exists between the bishops.” This week’s agreement builds on a covenant between the Anglican diocese of Qu’Appelle and the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Regina made in 2011. Bishops from all four denominations have also been meeting quarterly in Saskatchewan for a number of years. Hawkins said the covenant was a sign of hope in a period made difficult for the church by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agreement, he said, was reached after the bishops met online twice in March, and was signed by them digitally.

The covenant was signed by bishops and archbishops of the Anglican diocese of Saskatchewan; Mississippi, in the Anglican diocese of Saskatchewan; the Anglican diocese of Qu’Appelle; the Anglican diocese of Saskatoon; the Ukrainian Catholic eparchy of Saskatoon; the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Regina; the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas; the Roman Catholic diocese of Saskatoon; the Roman Catholic diocese of Prince Albert; and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada’s synod of Saskatchewan. ■

PWRDF responds to COVID-19

The Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund has allocated \$200,000 to support the following partners responding to COVID-19:

- **HelpAge Canada**, delivering meals and medicine to isolated seniors in Canada
- **Partners In Health**, supporting health care professionals responding to COVID-19 in underserved areas around the world
- **Village Health Works**, preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Burundi
- **ACT Alliance** (160 faith-based agencies) and its global response to prevent and treat COVID-19



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Read more about PWRDF’s COVID-19 response in the *Under the Sun* newsletter in this issue of the *Anglican Journal*, and on our website at pwrdf.org.



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Prisoners at high risk during pandemic: lawyer

Advocacy and thoughtful policy needed in face of potential crisis

By Donald C. Murray



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

AS CANADIAN courts started to shutter themselves against the coronavirus in the last two weeks of March, there were responsible and urgent efforts made by court staff, select judges, Crown prosecutors, police, defence counsel, social workers and community housing providers to get many prisoners out of Canadian jails and remand centres. With little guidance about how long the pandemic would keep the courts closed, the inspiration for the effort was to protect as many prisoners as possible from the risks that would follow from a COVID-19 infection in the confined, unhealthy environment of a detention institution. The practical result of these efforts has varied from province to province, within provinces, and between federal and provincial jurisdictions.

At first, it was seen to be important to get people who were on remand for non-violent offences out of the jails. People on remand are in jail because they have been denied release, not been granted release, or because they are unable to meet court-imposed conditions for their release. What these remand prisoners usually have in common is that they are in jail even though they have not been found guilty of the charges against them. Judges have acknowledged that some of these persons are in jail simply because they do not have stable housing outside of their prison. Those proved to be the easiest cases to deal with.

Prisoners who were close to the completion of their sentences were the next group which seemed safest to release from federal prisons and provincial correctional centres. If these offenders had been serving a sentence for non-violent offences, it seemed particularly smart to free them from the inherently unhealthy living conditions of living in close physical community with others, several of whom have significant health vulnerabilities.

The initiative to reduce the numbers kept in prisons, correctional centres, and remand centres seems to stall there. Courts in several provinces decided not to hold trials until at least June—and no jury trials before the fall. Remand prisoners who had already been waiting for trials are therefore now being told to wait substantially longer, and with no actual trial date scheduled. These prisoners can anticipate an even longer wait for trial once the courts choose to set a trial date in, hopefully, June. Prisoners who continue on remand until then can



▲ **“Prisoners are expected to continue to endure the health risks that the courts themselves are not prepared to face in their own spaces.”**

PHOTO: S-FAM PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

“Iran ... chose at the onset of the pandemic in that country to release more than 80,000 detained individuals.”

expect to engage in stiff competition with other prisoners for prompt court dates, and sufficient court time to deal with their matter fairly.

During this time of waiting by persons who may not be guilty, or who may not be violent or a danger to the public despite their criminal history, there are other burdens attributable to COVID-19. Prisons and correctional centres and remand centres have closed down any opportunity for prisoners to even have face-to-face visits through glass barriers, or to meet with a lawyer. Voice contact with family through telephone is subject to limited phone availability. Private telephone time even to speak with a lawyer remains scarce. Prisoners (or those who receive their calls) sometimes also need to be able to afford the charges that toll on each telephone call.

For those serving a sentence, or those whose behaviour has demonstrated an unacceptable public risk for violence when unsupervised in the community, or who have been denied release for some other reason, there can be no in-person chaplaincy service, nor community partner visitation programming, and no family visiting. This effective total separation of the remand population from the larger community is a most difficult feature of prisoner detention during this pandemic.

In an apparent effort to prove their capacity to maintain a healthy-enough correctional environment, the management at both federal and provincial levels have opted to confine, restrict and isolate their captive population more than ever. The answer to inadequate supplies of soap or disinfectant, or even the opportunity for daily showers has been to elevate the use of the most coercive prison tools. The federal correctional system has been less successful in preventing in-prison outbreaks of the

virus than the provincial systems, but there have been outbreaks at both levels. Some provinces have claimed an entire absence of infection within their institutions.

Some jurisdictions have started to figure out how provincial court trials might be able to go ahead. Unfortunately, superior courts have generally been less sympathetic than the provincial courts to claims that the pandemic constitutes an urgent enough problem to unlock the courts themselves. The risks to the health of prisoners, which physicians dispute and debate with the managers of the remand institutions, have not generally been seen as important enough to justify innovating processes in a way that would allow trials to proceed at the Superior Court level. While both levels of court take the time to work through their concerns, prisoners are expected to continue to endure the health risks that the courts themselves are not prepared to face in their own spaces. The message from the superior courts of several provinces has been that the pandemic threat of COVID-19 is not an “urgent crisis.” It is too often being seen as simply an interruption to regular operations.

Canada, like other countries, has experienced outbreaks of infections in its prisons, and deaths of prisoners. Offenders, as well as the presumptively innocent on remand, continue to be at serious health risk. This has persisted weeks into what governments across the country have declared to be states of emergency.

Other countries have responded differently. Iran, for example, chose at the onset of the pandemic in that country to release more than 80,000 detained individuals from their institutions of detention. Canada’s number of COVID-based releases would be miniscule in comparison.

There are still things that can be done. The creation of more community spaces for prisoners who have housing needs can help to keep people out of remand facilities as new people continue to get arrested during the pandemic weeks. For those who are compelled by law to await trial inside a remand facility, advocacy by the public for a more sensitive response by the trial courts to their plight might help. Thoughtfulness by government policy makers might also allow detention institutions themselves to conceive of a way for some better kind of community contact and chaplaincy services to be available to the justice system’s inmates. ■

Donald C. Murray, Q.C., began practicing criminal law at Dalhousie Legal Aid, Halifax, in 1983. He has continued a private criminal defence practice in Nova Scotia since 1985, in addition to working in the areas of human rights and Aboriginal justice. He is a warden at Christ Church in Dartmouth, N.S., and grew up in St. Paul’s Church in Lachine, Que.



PHOTO: MICHAEL HUDSON

The Rev. Leigh Kern

‘God’s total identification with the incarcerated’

MATT GARDNER

The spread of COVID-19 has drawn attention to the dangers pandemics pose to incarcerated people. For an Anglican perspective on the case for releasing prisoners, the *Journal* spoke with the Rev. Leigh Kern, coordinator of Indigenous ministries and reconciliation animator for the diocese of Toronto. A prison chaplain who regularly ministers to inmates, Kern has called for the depopulation of correctional facilities to prevent the spread of the virus. You can find the interview online, at <https://bit.ly/3aCMCKq>



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SINGING
WITH JOY ▶

God is here, God is with us

By Linda Nicholls

AS I WRITE this, we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown. A skiff of snow lies on the ground outside my window. Easter is behind us and ongoing uncertainty lies ahead. As you read this, our lives may already be very different. In the least, spring will be fully upon us, warming our bodies and encouraging our hearts with emerging new life.

We have experienced a profound disruption in our lives, our communities and our church. Grief has accompanied us as we faced many losses, perhaps including the devastating deaths of family and friends to the virus. The economy will require months of recovery, and charities, including faith communities, face unstable futures. The crisis uncovered gaps and inequities in our life together as our safety depended on those willing to sacrificially work while we stayed home and realized that those society often values least were essential—and deserve better pay and more respect.

We face new theological questions about the nature of the Eucharist and the always-present question: Where is God in the midst of suffering? We discovered that technology cannot fully replace gathering as a community as we ached to be together in Holy Week, to remember and celebrate. We discovered the fragility of life as one invisible virus could bring the entire world to a grinding halt in every aspect of life.



▲ **“God is here—and whatever happens in the future—we know we are not alone,” writes Archbishop Linda Nicholls.**

PHOTO: DAVIDE CANTELLI/UNSPLASH

Now we are called to pick up the pieces of shattered expectations and rebuild. Just as those who have survived a tornado or earthquake might consider how to rebuild better, so we too enter a time to ask questions. What have we learned? About the mission of God? About what is essential and what might be released? About what needs to change? About ourselves?

We have certainly learned that we can continue to connect with one another using available technology. Meetings from coast to coast were able to happen without the participants leaving home. Our carbon footprint has been reduced, and work has continued. We learned new skills on Zoom, Skype and conference calls. We can be connected for online worship with isolated communities and people. Some who might never consider entering a church building were able to drop in through online worship. Some clergy reported deeper relationships with parishioners as they connected by phone directly, including with those who had been disconnected for some time. We rediscovered the power of the daily office, shared online or through website resources. Families prayed together. And the primate joined worship or confirmation and young adult classes for conversation and questions from St. John's, N.L., to Caledonia; from Algoma to Niagara to Montreal.

We also discovered afresh that without our church buildings, our gathered worship, our coffee hours and Bible study groups, God is with us. Stripped of the usual supports for our faith, we are invited to meet God in our homes, in our grief and lamentation, in our joy and sorrow, in our longing for the familiar, and in our fears and anxiety. God is here—now and always—risen in the

resurrection of Easter. God is here in each other—through a window, across a driveway, over the phone or internet, in acts of kindness and generosity, in compassion and caring. God is here—and, whatever happens in the future, we know we are not alone. The church is wherever God's people proclaim this Good News.

Remember the early disciples who left behind their vocations to follow Jesus. They entered into the loss of every expectation they had through the crucifixion and then embraced the radical possibility of the resurrection to be sent into the world with nothing but the Good News. Peter and John greet a lame beggar with these words: “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk” (Acts 3:6). And they allowed the Holy Spirit to fill them with new power and energy to proclaim the Good News to strangers in the streets at Pentecost (Acts 2).

So whatever lies ahead in the choices and decisions we need to make, we go into them in the presence of God, guided by the Holy Spirit, in the name and power of Jesus Christ. We go into them with a faith strengthened and tested through adversity. We enter it with possible trepidation—and also with excitement at the adventure that lies before us, as it did the first disciples.

For a joyful celebration of Pentecost and of our unity in diversity with our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada colleagues and Indigenous Anglicans, see our Pentecost video being launched on May 31 at anglicanlutheran.ca/pentecost. ■

Archbishop Linda Nicholls is the primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

WALKING
TOGETHER ▶

Chaos and the ministry of the gospel

By Mark MacDonald

ONE OF THE many things that our recent pandemic crisis has revealed is the difficulties our institutions have in facing chaos. To be clear, I am not at all critical of the ways that people have tried to adapt to the realities of COVID-19. I have seen courage, compassion and innovation from many in our churches. These are human responses that we may be grateful for.

These praiseworthy human responses don't hide some of the problematic institutional elements revealed by the crisis. One of the most visible is our ongoing and very modern commitment to limit the possibility of chaos in our institutions and ministries. Now, you might think, “What's wrong with that?” At some level, I agree. But as recent events have shown, this is impossible and, in a community committed to love God, each other, humanity and creation, attempts to eliminate chaos can damage our deepest calling.

Anyone who has been a parent has learned that eliminating chaos is



▲ **The church needs a “built-in capacity to tolerate chaos.”**

PHOTO: MATT HOFFMAN/UNSPLASH

impossible. While I am not advocating using parenthood as the only model for ministry, there are aspects of parenthood that are a bit closer to the Jesus way than organizational expectations imported from business and modern secular institutions. In parenthood, you learn that if you are going to love, you must expect chaos—at least once in a while.

While it is useful, perhaps essential, to limit chaos, it is not good to try to build organizational systems that try to eliminate it. The efficiency, normalcy and lack of surprises expected by some models of modern leadership and governance are not conducive to the type of vulnerable love that Jesus demanded of Peter in the last chapter of the Gospel of John. Jesus promised Peter chaos. It is the price of love.

A number of years ago, I heard someone praise a bishop as someone who didn't like surprises. This was, to the one who made the comment, the sign of a great and firm leader. An old, wise bishop said in response, “He must not like being a bishop.” The one who made the comment didn't appear to get it.

I think many of the institutional models that we have tried in recent decades have

praiseworthy aspects. But if we are going to be available to the hurts and needs of humanity, if we are going to open our hearts to the many wounded people of this time, we must have a built-in capacity to tolerate chaos. We must learn how to be humane, as we serve as individuals and groups in this work, and, at the same time, know how to be available to those in need. We must learn to embrace some of the chaos of the poor, if we are to love and serve the poor.

Some efficient systems do embrace life's chaos. If you have visited an emergency room you have seen one. They try to balance the disciplined, ordered delivery of medical care with an embrace of the chaos that this ideal invites. To refuse chaos would be disastrous, if not evil. Mitigate chaos as much as you can, but know that an absence of chaos is incompatible with public service. It is also not compatible with an organization that claims its fundamental ideal is sacrificial love. ■

Archbishop Mark MacDonald is national Indigenous archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada.

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GUEST COLUMN ▶

COVID-19's impossible choices

What is the church's ministry to the dying?

By William Cliff



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

THIRTY YEARS ago, in seminary, we would often talk about the situations and emergencies that might overcome us in ministry. We talked of the history of cholera epidemics, of plague, war and disease. We learned the stories of heroic clergy who ministered on frontiers when disease would sweep through settlements. We questioned what the “right thing” in ministry would be in such situations. We talked about the ministry of the church in those times. We also learned faithfully through our clinical training the “right way” to do pastoral visits and ministry at the time of death. We had no frame of reference for the images we have seen in the past two months from around the world—of coffins stacked in Italian churches or weeping doctors and nurses who have worked themselves to exhaustion. Nothing we learned prepared us for this.

So now the whole world is thinking more urgently about dying. Christians are supposed to consider the issue of dying theologically: how we die, when we die. What comforts will be there at the time of our death? Images and stories from Italy, where thousands have died in hospitals, are accompanied by stories of those whose age or infirmity had them triaged away from hospitals and ventilators and sent them home with the assumption they would not survive. It was decided that these people should at least die in comfortable surroundings, either by a conscious choice or because of lack of beds. Worse yet, was the discovery of the dead in their beds in nursing homes in Spain—abandoned and alone, with no one watching over them.

The first thing that has been destroyed in this pandemic is our illusion of autonomy. The idea that one has a choice about lifestyle, travel or simple freedoms has been exposed as false. The church has been saying for some time that the self-centred and self-reliant society we have been building for the last decades is an illusion. All it took was a virus—some RNA wrapped in a lipid protein—to prove it. The terror we feel is not only existential; it is compounded by a loss of control, and grief, as we lose loved ones without recourse to our usual comforts.

In an April 1 article in the *Ottawa*



▲ **The COVID-19 pandemic, writes Bishop Cliff, is “drawing us out to become more loving, more caring and sacrificial in our love for one another.”**

PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPHEE.EU/SHUTTERSTOCK

Citizen, palliative care physicians reminded our strained-to-bursting medical system that it cannot simply walk away from those for whom an emergency triage may send them home to die. These doctors, who particularly serve the dying, remind the rest of the medical establishment that even in a pandemic, comfort care (or in this case “palliative sedation”) is still both medically necessary and a matter of human decency for those who choose not to be intubated or wish to go home to die untreated.

So what counsel might the church have to offer in the midst of this crisis?

Spiritually, nothing in a Christian's life belongs to them. If we have been baptised into Christ's death, and our life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3), then it follows that our death is also not our own. Generations of Christians who survived disease, starvation, plague, war and pestilence knew this. An example of the moral obligation to act to relieve suffering and intervene is brought into sharp focus by Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Punished for protecting Jews and issuing visas and passports by the Salazar government in neutral Portugal during World War II, Aristides was recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations” by Israel in 1966. His explanation of his actions and resignation to the punishment he received may be instructive to us now, in our different context: “Starting today I will obey my conscience. As a Christian I do not have the right to let these women and men die.” It was not a pandemic, but those were equally life-and-death decisions.

For Christians through the ages, the idea that one was supposed to be somehow immune to these sufferings was as far from Christian consciousness as the east was from the west. To be faithful was to be humble before God, for no one knew when one would be called to eternity. This is a world that had been consigned to history—or movies—away from our developed-world experience. These last few weeks, everything has changed. We find ourselves standing in the same place as generations past; those for whom death came early, or swiftly or painfully or while alone and far from loved ones.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.” (Romans 14:7-8) This is

where we must begin to root ourselves: in Christian hope. As a church, if we advocate for those who are vulnerable and then denied intensive care simply because of circumstance, for what shall we ask?

Comforting the dying is core to the church's mission. It is evangelical in that it teaches those who observe our concern and care for the dying, the Christian doctrine of the value of life. In sacrificing to comfort those who are at the end of their life's journey, we are caring for the “little Christ” we all became in our baptism. Each bedside can become the foot of the cross for loved ones. Caring for the dying also testifies to the world that in Christ, while we may grieve a death and may even be inconsolable, we do not despair. In normal circumstances, our spirits rebel at thinking of these sacrifices. “It should not be so!” we explain to ourselves, but our facade of control and comfort has been torn away. Those in the intensive care units elsewhere have learned this, and have made the unthinkable decisions: choosing to whom limited resources are applied.

It may be our ministry to remind our harried and heroic medical establishment that those who have declined or been designated not to have treatment for the worst of COVID-19's process are still worthy of medical comfort and care. Even with resources stretched to the breaking point, both young and old must have access to care which does not injure their dignity. Palliative sedation means there is no cause for anyone to die in distress. Nor is there need for death to be hastened by interventions with cocktails that restore an illusion of control. Our Christian faith lays upon us an obligation. We must be prepared to care for those around us, even those who may have been forgotten. That care may be costly, and it may include impossible choices.

This crisis is reminding the church of many things, of which our mortality, our vulnerability and our responsibility to one another are just a few. It is also drawing us out to become more loving, more caring and sacrificial in our love for one another. The complicated, cruel and death-denying world which has been constructed for us is being dismantled. Let examples of love, compassion, mercy and sacrifice be our motivation and, if necessary, our epitaph. Now is exactly the time that what we preach should be manifest in advocating and protecting those who are on the very edge of eternity, for we believe we will see them again and give to God an accounting for the care we have offered.

The Rt. Rev. William Cliff is the bishop of the diocese of Brandon.

“The first thing that has been destroyed in this pandemic is our illusion of autonomy.... All it took was a virus—some RNA wrapped in a lipid protein—to prove it.”

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THE REV. GRAHAM SINGH

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COVID-19's powers of revelation



In the midst of pandemic, we see how urgently we must 'seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation,' writes Ryan Weston

By Ryan Weston

AS I WRITE this in late April, the crisis created by the global COVID-19 pandemic has all of us adjusting to new realities. Many people are working from home, others are attempting to help their children continue their education from their living rooms and some are doing both. Frontline workers, from health-care staff to grocery store employees, find themselves adjusting to new practices and risks in their workplaces. Parish leaders are discovering new ways of connecting virtually with their communities, while churches and other agencies are establishing new processes for providing vital services to their communities.

We are all being impacted by this crisis; however, we are not all affected in the same way. The onset of this pandemic has laid bare some of the ways particular communities of people in Canada and around the world have been left especially vulnerable to the impacts of this disease and the economic and social upheavals that have come with it. These inequities are not simply tragic accidents, but rather are the result of years and indeed decades of policy decisions that have created systemic barriers that prevent some members of our communities from being as safe from the health, social and economic impacts of this pandemic as others are.

From the lack of clean water and sufficient health-care services in many Indigenous communities in Canada, to the housing and shelter crisis in municipalities across the country, to the dearth of protections for low-income seniors in long-term care and the vulnerabilities

▲ **"Frontline workers, from health-care staff to grocery store employees, find themselves adjusting to new practices and risks in their workplaces."**

PHOTO: PRAWET THADTHIAM/SHUTTERSTOCK

“**COVID-19 has provided a stark reminder of the many ways that the policies of our governments make life more precarious for so many.**”

of incarcerated people, COVID-19 has provided a stark reminder of the many ways that the policies of our governments make life more precarious for so many. While much attention, rightly, has been focused on addressing the immediate impacts of this crisis (and many of our parishes have played a key role in this), we also need to begin to refocus on these systemic issues—which go well beyond those I have listed here—so that we can begin to improve policy in a way that will help to save lives, now and into the future.

The Fourth Mark of Mission calls us all to “seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation.” For decades advocates, including many Anglicans and other people of faith, have been working to change many of the policies which contribute to the suffering we are seeing now, but such changes require a real shift in the political will of everyone to prioritize the well-being of all the members of our communities.

Starting now, and continuing once we are able to return to some sense of normalcy, we need to clearly and consistently call our leaders to account for the decisions they make on our behalf and to remind ourselves that we can do better as a society. My hope is that, in coming out of this crisis, we might all focus our energy on building the world we want to see and be a part of, the world God calls us, over and over again in scripture, to create. Together we can build the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. ■

Ryan Weston is the Anglican Church of Canada's lead animator for public witness for social and ecological justice.

Hope Bear is taking COVID-19 very seriously. Lots of physical distancing and staying at home.

ANGLICAN FOUNDATION OF CANADA

SOURCE: CANADIAN BIBLE SOCIETY, USED WITH PERMISSION. PHOTO: KEEP SMILING PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Bible Readings

July

August

September

DAY	READING	DAY	READING	DAY	READING	DAY	READING	DAY	READING		
<input type="checkbox"/>	01 Isaiah 32:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	17 Isaiah 45:9-46:2	<input type="checkbox"/>	01 Genesis 31:43-32:12	<input type="checkbox"/>	17 Psalms 124:1-125:5	<input type="checkbox"/>	01 Exodus 12:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	16 Philippians 1:15-30
<input type="checkbox"/>	02 Zechariah 9:9-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	18 Matthew 13:36-58	<input type="checkbox"/>	02 Genesis 32:13-32	<input type="checkbox"/>	18 Psalm 138:1-8	<input type="checkbox"/>	02 Exodus 12:15-28	<input type="checkbox"/>	17 Jonah 3:1-4:11
<input type="checkbox"/>	03 Hebrews 10:19-11:3	<input type="checkbox"/>	19 Psalm 139:1-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	03 Psalm 85:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/>	19 Isaiah 51:1-11	<input type="checkbox"/>	03 Exodus 12:29-42	<input type="checkbox"/>	18 Matthew 19:1-15
<input type="checkbox"/>	04 Romans 7:14-25	<input type="checkbox"/>	20 Romans 8:31-39	<input type="checkbox"/>	04 Romans 10:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/>	20 Isaiah 51:12-23	<input type="checkbox"/>	04 Psalms 149:1-150:6	<input type="checkbox"/>	19 Matthew 19:16-30
<input type="checkbox"/>	05 Matthew 11:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	21 1 Kings 3:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	05 Matthew 14:13-33	<input type="checkbox"/>	21 Exodus 1:8-2:10	<input type="checkbox"/>	05 Romans 13:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	20 Matthew 20:1-16
<input type="checkbox"/>	06 Matthew 11:16-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	22 John 20:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/>	06 Daniel 7:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	22 Exodus 2:11-25	<input type="checkbox"/>	06 Matthew 18:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	21 Matthew 9:1-17
<input type="checkbox"/>	07 Matthew 12:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	23 Genesis 29:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	07 Daniel 7:15-28	<input type="checkbox"/>	23 Romans 12:1-8	<input type="checkbox"/>	07 Ecclesiastes 8:9-16	<input type="checkbox"/>	22 Philippians 2:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/>	08 Matthew 12:15-32	<input type="checkbox"/>	24 Genesis 29:15-35	<input type="checkbox"/>	08 1 Kings 19:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/>	24 Luke 22:24-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	08 James 5:7-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	23 Philippians 2:19-30
<input type="checkbox"/>	09 Matthew 12:33-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	25 Matthew 20:17-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	09 Psalm 105:1-22	<input type="checkbox"/>	25 Exodus 3:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	09 Genesis 50:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	24 Ezekiel 18:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 Matthew 13:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	26 Psalm 7:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	10 Psalm 105:23-45	<input type="checkbox"/>	26 Jeremiah 15:1-9	<input type="checkbox"/>	10 Genesis 50:15-26	<input type="checkbox"/>	25 Ezekiel 18:19-32
<input type="checkbox"/>	11 Matthew 13:18-35	<input type="checkbox"/>	27 Psalm 17:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	11 Isaiah 56:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/>	27 Jeremiah 15:10-21	<input type="checkbox"/>	11 Exodus 13:1-22	<input type="checkbox"/>	26 Matthew 21:18-32
<input type="checkbox"/>	12 Isaiah 55:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/>	28 Psalm 145:1-21	<input type="checkbox"/>	12 Romans 11:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/>	28 Romans 12:9-21	<input type="checkbox"/>	12 Exodus 14:19-15:18	<input type="checkbox"/>	27 Psalm 25:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/>	13 Psalm 119:105-120	<input type="checkbox"/>	29 Romans 9:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/>	13 Romans 11:19-36	<input type="checkbox"/>	29 Matthew 14:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/>	13 Matthew 18:21-35	<input type="checkbox"/>	28 Daniel 10:1-11:2a
<input type="checkbox"/>	14 Psalm 119:121-144	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 Romans 9:19-33	<input type="checkbox"/>	14 Matthew 14:34-15:20	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 Matthew 16:21-28	<input type="checkbox"/>	14 John 19:17-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	29 Revelation 12:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 Isaiah 44:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	31 Genesis 31:22-42	<input type="checkbox"/>	15 Ezekiel 44:1-9	<input type="checkbox"/>	31 Psalm 26:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/>	15 Philippians 1:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 Psalm 19:1-14
<input type="checkbox"/>	16 Isaiah 44:21-45:8			<input type="checkbox"/>	16 Matthew 15:21-39						

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Primate: Virus to prompt reflections on Eucharist

Continued from p. 1
qualitatively different matter.

“Whereas musical and theatrical performances can be moved online, the Eucharist is not about performance by one for the many and cannot move into that mode,” she says. “Efforts to replace the community’s physical-and-spiritual gathering with practices that try to offer a eucharistic communion online, though well-intentioned, do not reflect our sacramental theology, which is deeply about the physical-and-spiritual together.”

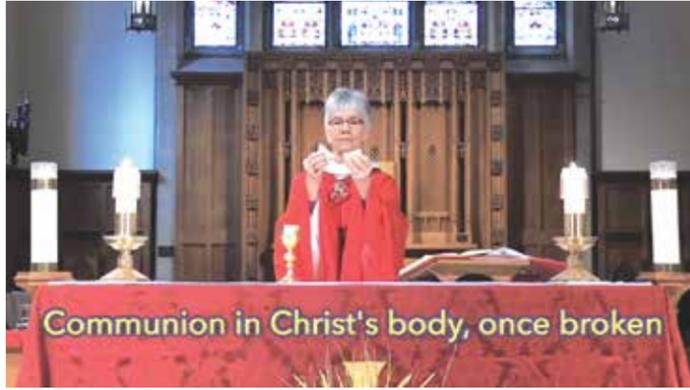
Instead, Scully says, the current moment can be “a time of eucharistic fasting, in which we join with the whole communion of saints in longing for the bread of new life and the wine of the age to come.”

Liturgical practice in each diocese, however, is ultimately up to the discretion of the diocesan bishop. As a result, the question of the Eucharist has sparked much debate among Anglicans who have put forward different solutions.

In the ecclesiastical province of Ontario, bishops asked for a voluntary fast for the duration of isolation measures for COVID-19.

“The way we see it is that the Eucharist is something that we do together in community,” Archbishop and Metropolitan Anne Germond says. “It’s not an act of a priest on his own, even if there’s a virtual community out there somewhere.”

Other ecclesiastical provinces, however, have taken less sweeping approaches. Bishops in the province of Canada, for example, decided not to come to a unanimous decision, but are instead each setting out guidelines for their own dioceses. The bishop of Montreal and all three Newfoundland bishops have called for a eucharistic fast in their dioceses, Archbishop and Metropolitan Ron Cutler says. Meanwhile, the bishops of Quebec and Fredericton, as well as Cutler in his own diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, have left the decision up to local parish clergy.



▲ From Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver, Archbishop Melissa Skelton has led filmed Eucharist celebrations while retaining all norms for physical distancing and sanitization.

PHOTO: CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL/YOUTUBE

Cutler estimates that 85% of parishes in his diocese had moved to online worship based on a service of the word, with the remainder offering some form of virtual Eucharist. However, he expresses some discomfort with the term “eucharistic fast.”

“I’d be a whole lot more comfortable in saying we’re in exile right now, or we’re having a eucharistic famine,” he adds. “This is not really a choice.”

In the province of British Columbia and Yukon, bishops have taken what Archbishop and Metropolitan Melissa Skelton describes as a “blended” approach, with many dioceses and parishes filming or livestreaming Eucharists.

Within her own diocese of New Westminster, Skelton has not put forward the idea of fasting from the Eucharist.

“I don’t think the church should ever fast from the Eucharist,” she says. “We just have to do it in a different way, and maybe a way that feels not as satisfying as we would normally do it.”

Instead, Skelton says she wants “all the tools that the Anglican tradition offers” to approximate the Eucharist as much as possible.

From Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver, the archbishop has led filmed Eucharist celebrations while retaining all norms for physical distancing and sanitization. These video Eucharists include only the celebrant and one other person, usually a deacon, standing at least two

metres apart. Wine is consecrated and drunk by the celebrant.

One other person stands at a safe distance, filming the sacrament with a zoom lens. All other parts of the worship service are pre-recorded on video and edited in.

The situation in the province of Rupert’s Land is similar. While some Anglicans there have embraced a eucharistic fast, others have favoured the livestreaming of Eucharists.

Archbishop and Metropolitan Gregory Kerr-Wilson in his diocese of Calgary has given permission for clergy to film celebrations of the Eucharist and share them online. Those uncomfortable with doing so, he says, may instead take the approach of a eucharistic fast.

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, says that there is an ongoing discussion across the church regarding the Eucharist—one she believes is likely to continue even after the pandemic, particularly for the Faith, Worship and Ministry committee and diocesan doctrine and worship committees.

“I do think that after the COVID-19 situation has calmed down and people are back to regular practice, this may well be an area for some further reflection...because it has raised such conversation, and it would be good to do some further thinking and praying about and writing about,” she says.

The primate’s personal inclination tends toward skepticism regarding the filming of Eucharists for people to watch at home.

“There’s something important about being physically gathered together as a community in which everyone participates,” Nicholls says.

The primate says she longs for the Eucharist. “I miss not just the bread and wine itself, but I miss that whole gathering as a community and as God’s people together, praying together, in communion together,” Nicholls says.

“But it will make me appreciate that much more deeply when it is restored, and in the meantime to ask: how do I spend my time with God in new ways?” ■

“I’d be a whole lot more comfortable in saying we’re in exile right now, or we’re having a eucharistic famine. This is not really a choice.”

—Archbishop Ron Cutler, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Canada and bishop of Nova Scotia and P.E.I.

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