

Archbishop's Pastoral Letter to Vestries, 2012
to be read or circulated on the Sunday of the parish's annual vestry meeting



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

To the Clergy, Churchwardens and Parishioners
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the Name of our Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

As you gather for your annual vestry meeting, the Area Bishops and I offer you our prayers and good wishes for the year ahead. We are profoundly thankful for your faithfulness and commitment to worship, work and witness to the Christian faith as members of the Anglican Church in Canada.

We are grateful for the witness you give daily in your parish, particularly in reaching out to the marginalized and vulnerable in your community. We cherish your prayers offered week by week in the 250+ churches of the diocese that sustain and encourage us in our ministry

As we move forward into a year fraught with uncertainty but also rich with hope, let us keep focused on whose we are and whom we serve. Christ is very present in our daily lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, and God invites us to trust that in walking daily with Him as our companion and guide, we have no need for unnecessary fear and anxiety. In the baptismal covenant, as a people “marked as Christ’s own forever,” we promise to “continue in the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers; to persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord; to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ; to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving neighbour as self; and to strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.” (BAS, pp. 158-9) Every day, by God’s grace we are invited to live more fully into this covenant even in the face of difficulty and challenge.

The recent ‘Occupy Toronto’ movement which pitched camp next door to our Cathedral Church and Diocesan Centre (and similar events across the world) was a stark reminder and challenge to all of us, both in church and beyond, that all is not well in our communities. Disparities abound. We cannot ignore the needs and concerns (whether spiritual, physical, economic, social) of so many who are our neighbours. What is our mission, if it is not that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” Luke 4: 18. We thank the many of you who individually and collectively bring hope and grace in the most practical ways to the lives of others in the name of Christ. You have provided almost \$1.4 million to support FaithWorks ministries this year. In your own parishes, from food banks and shelters, to counseling and healing, from prayer and Bible study, to advocacy and community engagement, you make a difference.

I am deeply appreciative and encouraged by all the parishes that have responded enthusiastically and sacrificially to the *Our Faith-Our Hope: Re-imagine Church* campaign. Your response has been extraordinarily generous, including a wonderful pledge of \$1 a month from a young girl’s allowance! Many parishes have exceeded their goal and we are well on the way to meet our \$50 million objective. Already funds raised for the parish share of the campaign are beginning to be returned for parish-identified projects, and a process is being developed to allocate funds from the diocesan

portion beginning in the Fall. In June we plan to host a service to celebrate and give thanks for the successful accomplishment of the campaign.

Because of your generosity in Faith and Hope we look forward with excitement to what we will be able to do as a church over the next five years to invest creatively in the work entrusted to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. I thank those, both clergy and laity, who have been taking the lead in this, for your dedication and exemplary leadership. It has been hard work and deeply life-giving!

Here are a few significant events that I encourage you to pray for and attend that are taking place in our Diocese in 2012:

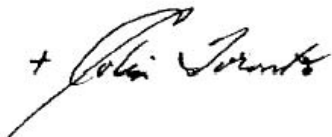
- a training event for churchwardens new and experienced in early Spring offered in each of the areas.
- the annual Vital Church Planting Conference to be held February 2 - 4, 2012 at St. Paul's, Bloor Street, Toronto. This conference for laity and clergy has grown tremendously over the past five years and is a wonderful learning opportunity for parishes looking for new, innovative and inspirational ways to live out their ministry today while also revitalizing the rich inheritance we have received.
- the biennial clergy conference will be held May 14 - 16, 2012 at Brock University and I look forward to seeing all the clergy there.
- a financial Synod will be held on June 16, 2012.
- Justice Camp will be hosted by the Diocese of Toronto August 19 - 24, 2012. It will take place at Trent University and registration can be done online. Visit www.justicecamp.ca for more information. I especially encourage young people in your parish to attend what will be a fun-filled, challenging, learning experience.
- Back to Church Sunday, on September 30, 2012.
- and the annual Outreach Conference to be held October 20, 2012.

Please visit our Diocesan website www.toronto.anglican.ca to see what else is happening in our Diocese and to find an incredible array of resources for your information and use.

Once more, on behalf of the College of Bishops, I express our profound thanks and appreciation to the clergy of our Diocese, and to the churchwardens and lay leaders of our parishes for the work that you do so faithfully and tirelessly for Christ's beloved Church.

I wish each and every one of you every blessing in the year before us.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Colin R. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Colin R. Johnson
Archbishop of Toronto