

The Right Reverend
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Anglican Church of Canada

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The Feast of the Confession of St. Peter

Dear friends in York-Scarborough,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 1:2)

I recently marked the first anniversary of my consecration as a bishop. In reflecting on the past twelve months, I am reminded of the tremendous privilege of serving as your area bishop. I am pleased to say that I have now visited most of the 58 parishes and missions in York-Scarborough. These visits have included being with you for Sunday morning worship, ordinations, confirmations, celebrations of new ministry, anniversaries, and meetings with parish leadership. Thank you for your warm welcome as I have travelled across the area. I have been grateful for your prayers and good wishes, and your desire to be co-workers together, for the glory of God and the extension of God's reign.

One of the priorities I identified a year ago was getting to know the clergy and people in my episcopal area. I am pleased to say that I have now met with all the active clergy, including our deacons, and many lay leaders as well. I have heard your hopes and concerns, and have tried to offer words of encouragement and guidance in these rapidly changing times. In spite of the challenges around us and within, I see signs of life and growth everywhere I go. There are renewed efforts to engage our neighbours and share the good news of God in Christ. I see clergy and lay people recommitting themselves to study and Christian formation in order to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. Anglicans are mobilizing and collaborating with people of other faiths and traditions to feed the hungry and give shelter to the homeless, often doing more with less. These are all signs of the Kingdom of God in our midst. We are also now being guided by our diocesan strategic plan, *Growing in Christ*, which I hope will set the stage for healthy and more dynamic ministries across the area. You may be interested to know that 25% of the parishes in the Diocese of Toronto are growing, and many of them are right here in York-Scarborough.

The past year was a time of change in the York-Scarborough episcopal office. We said farewell to Karen Isaacs, who had briefly served as my Administrative Assistant. Karen left last spring in order to respond to a call to ordained ministry. We then welcomed Sue Willoughby as the new Administrative Assistant, and she has been tremendous. Sue does a great job of managing my calendar and correspondence, and ensuring that I am able to stay on top of 58 very different and dynamic communities. Sue works closely with our exceptionally capable synod office staff, who are always just a phone call or email away!

I want to acknowledge the excellent work of our five Regional Deans: the Reverend Ian LaFleur (Eglinton), the Reverend Greg Carpenter (Scarborough), the Reverend Sherman Hesselgrave (St. James), the Reverend Shelley McVea (Toronto East) and the Reverend Heather Gwynne-Timothy (York Mills). Along with our area liturgical officers – the Reverend Geoffrey Sangwine and the Reverend Greg Carpenter – they are excellent resources for parishes, and provide me with invaluable advice.



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Our area is also blessed with many youth ministers, who are ably led by our two York-Scarborough Youth Facilitators, Jillian Ruch and Ian Physick. In the fall of 2017, we made the decision to increase their time in that ministry, and we are already seeing the fruits of that decision. Just a few weeks ago, I attended the York-Scarborough Youth Leaders' Summit, where those involved in this important ministry were able to share ideas and strategies for ministry with our youth.

One of the joys of being a bishop in the Diocese of Toronto is our College of Bishops, with whom the joys and burdens of episcopal ministry are shared. I am grateful to work alongside wonderful colleagues: Archbishop Colin Johnson, Bishop Peter Fenty (York-Simcoe), Bishop Riscylla Walsh-Shaw (Trent Durham), Bishop Jenny Andison (York-Credit Valley), and Canon Mary Conliffe (Diocesan Executive Assistant).

As we look ahead to a new year, we face significant change. Archbishop Colin Johnson has announced his intention to retire at the end of this year. His leadership over the past few decades has left an indelible mark on our Diocese and on the wider Church. He has provided wise, steady and faithful leadership in a time of immense change, and we look forward to opportunities to express our thanks to Archbishop Colin and Ellen in the coming months. On June 9, we will elect a coadjutor bishop, who will become the new diocesan bishop at the beginning of 2019. Please keep this process and the candidates in your prayers.

In the coming months, a number of events will be of interest to the clergy and people of our area. Firstly, I am teaching a Lenten course called *Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John*, which comes to us from the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Boston, and was recommended by the Archbishop at our recent synod. The clergy of the Church of the Resurrection will join me in leading this study, which runs for five Monday evenings, beginning on February 26. On Saturday, March 3, I invite all of you to a York-Scarborough Visioning Day at St. Andrew, Scarborough, where we will share ideas and develop strategies for mission and growth in York-Scarborough. On April 30 and May 1, I will be gathering the area clergy together for an overnight retreat for the purposes of study and mutual support. We haven't done this in many years, and I look forward to restoring this annual time away.

Finally, I want to express my thanks to all of you, and especially those who exercise leadership in your own parishes. Whether you are stepping down from a particular ministry, or continuing on, or taking up a new role at this annual Vestry meeting, thank you for your commitment and faithfulness. You are a blessing to the Church in our Diocese.

I am writing this letter on the Feast of the Confession of St. Peter. As our Church celebrates Peter's claim that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16), may we have boldness in our own proclamation, so that others may come to the knowledge and love of God in Christ.

Yours faithfully,

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