



A Pastoral Letter to Vestry 2018

January 25, 2018
The Conversion of Paul

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

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

This past week, the Anglican Church of Canada remembered the ministry of Richard Meux Benson, the founder in 1865 of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, the first order of monks in the Anglican Communion since the Reformation. In his letter to one young man who was considering a monastic vocation, Fr. Benson wrote that he and his brother monks in the SSJE were “living on a truth and loving it!”

York-Credit Valley includes a wide variety of parishes, each with a unique history and with particular gifts to share. But one characteristic that our parishes have in common with each other is that all of them were founded by women and men who were living on a truth – the truth of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – and loving it. This shared reality explains why each of our parishes was planted in the first place: the new life that flowed out of the redeeming knowledge of Christ is what propelled our forebears to start new churches, prayerfully engage with their neighbourhoods, and seek to be the hands and feet of Christ for the poor and those on the margins of society. Living on that very same truth, and loving it, will also lead to the renewal and revitalization of our parishes today.

The history of the Church – God’s chosen partner for the healing of the nations – has always been a tale of both decline and renewal, with some denominations dying, some being renewed, and others being born along the way. How should this historical perspective inform our current ministry in York-Credit Valley? In my first year as your Bishop, I have been keen to listen closely to the people of God in our Area, to discern where God is calling us as we seek God’s will for the future. I have held two Town Halls and have been inspired by the level of engagement demonstrated by the laity and clergy of our parishes. There was significant consensus around the need to put more of our time, energy and finances into children’s and youth ministries, to develop our lay leaders, and to share resources generously to enable the effective discipleship of people of all ages. Building on our Diocesan Strategic Plan, *Growing in Christ*, our Area Council will be turning its attention to these priorities, as well as working with me to discern where parishes need to be re-configured or strengthened and where new ministries, serving people we are not currently reaching, need to be started.

This letter greets you as you are preparing to hold your Annual General Meeting (Vestry meeting). This gathering is an opportunity for you to celebrate all that God has done in your midst over the past year, to look forward with hope to the future that God is preparing for you, and to ensure that your finances and your lay leaders reflect that future. I want to thank all those who have served as Wardens, Treasurers, Synod representatives, and in a variety of other ministry roles, and those who are stepping forward in new leadership. You stand in a proud tradition of Anglicans who — living on a truth and loving it — have for generations faithfully served to build up local parishes. Thank you.

I also want to draw your attention to the Vestry motion advocating for affordable housing and combatting homelessness in the GTA. Earlier this winter – joining with other Anglicans, faith leaders and city councillors – I spoke at City Hall and called on Mayor Tory to create more shelter beds in our city. Anglican advocacy seems to have contributed in some small way to the city’s response to the homelessness crisis. God asks us to use our not inconsiderable voice to draw attention to the plight of the most vulnerable and to be willing to be part of the solution to societal problems.

In February I will be attending a training program for new bishops from around the Anglican Communion at Canterbury Cathedral and Lambeth Palace. York-Credit Valley – with all its ethnic, linguistic, theological and liturgical diversity – resembles the Anglican Communion in microcosm, and I look forward to building relationships with bishops from around the Communion, and sharing all that is hope-filled in our life together here in the Diocese.

Many of our parishes are in transition. In 2017 I oversaw the appointment of seven new clergy, and I anticipate a similar number of new appointments in 2018. An older generation of parishioners is leaving us a legacy of faith and financial generosity, and a new generation is being shaped. Our Diocese is also in the midst of a critical transition as Archbishop Johnson prepares to retire at the end of the year, and we thank God for his 40 years of dedicated ministry and leadership as a priest and bishop. His legacy will be multi-faceted, and not the least of it is his hope that the Diocese of Toronto will remain a “big tent” where all are welcome and given opportunity to contribute to our rich life together in Christ.

This letter comes with my prayers for you, for your parish and for the neighbourhoods in which God has called us to serve and bear witness.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Jennifer Andison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Reverend Jennifer Andison
Area Bishop of York-Credit Valley
Bishop Suffragan of Toronto