



A Pastoral Letter to Vestry 2019

January 18, 2019

First Day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

My sisters and brothers,

Grace and peace to you, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am writing this letter as I prepare to fly off to India, at the invitation of the Diocese of Madhya Kerala, to strengthen our relationship with the Church of South India. As you know, York-Credit Valley is incredibly diverse, and we have Christians, and those who are spiritually searching, worshipping in our churches from all over the globe—from Spain to Mongolia, Kenya to China, and everywhere in between.

As I visit parishes I have been freshly reminded of the palpable spiritual hunger in our neighbourhoods, and how our gracious Heavenly Father continues to draw people into Anglican churches throughout the week. Are we ready to receive them? Have we ensured our website is engaging for a spiritual seeker? Is our Sunday morning worship beautiful and welcoming for someone who has never been before? What opportunities do we provide for people to intentionally investigate the claims of Jesus, and for children and teens to explore spiritually without feeling judged? Have we noticed that people from other immigrant groups are beginning to visit our churches and are we adding, for example, music in their languages/styles and an explicit welcome in our bulletins and on our signs/websites? All of this, of course, requires prayer and hard work as well as an intentional and sometimes sacrificial commitment of resources. It is a joy for me to see first-hand how many prayerful and hard-working people there are in our churches and how they are creatively and boldly using the resources that God has provided to draw people into closer relationship with Jesus. Thank you!

May I encourage you in 2019 to dedicate creative energy into strengthening the prayer ministry of your church. Historical research has shown that time and again, renewal and new life in churches consistently begin with a renewal in the prayer life of the local church. Are your Prayers of the People each week asking God for renewal, that more visitors would come to the church, and that you would be given more opportunities to serve the poor? Are your meetings beginning and ending with time for prayer? Do you have a dedicated group praying each day for the neighbourhood, and are you equipping people to pray at home and with their children and grandchildren? All parishes in York-Credit Valley are invited to participate in [Thy Kingdom Come](#) this year, an initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury that has become a global phenomenon—10 days of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost for our friends to come to know the love of Jesus.

I encourage you also to present to your Vestry this year's [Social Justice Motion](#), which calls us to voice our support for those with first-hand knowledge of the impacts of poverty and, as the hands and feet of Christ, seek action on their behalf, either through direct outreach or through advocacy for policy changes or more accessible services.

I am so grateful for all the ministry—being the hands and feet of Christ—that you will be celebrating at your Annual Vestry Meeting. A deep thank you to those of you who are serving as Wardens and Treasurers, those who serve in children and youth ministry, caring for the property, making our worship of God beautiful, and those who serve in our social justice ministries.

It continues to be a joy to serve you as your Bishop, and please join me in continuing to uphold our new Diocesan Bishop, Bishop Andrew Asbil, in prayer as we move forward together following Christ.

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:13-14

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