



June 3, 2020

Commemoration of the Martyrs of Uganda, 1886 and 1978

Pastoral Letter to the Parishes of York-Credit Valley

*How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?
Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?*
Habbakuk 1:2

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

I write to you in a time of lament. Over a third of the Psalms are laments, and the apostle Paul says that the entire creation groans (Romans 8:22). The created world in which we live, while beautiful, is contaminated with the broken effects of sin—both our personal sinfulness, but also sinful structures that are built up and sustained by humanity. While death is the ultimate reminder that all is not well with the world, there are many other examples: Covid-19, failed relationships, abuse of creation, loneliness, sexism, homophobia, and racism.

The last few weeks have brutally reminded us of the devastating legacy and present reality of the sin of racism. The deaths of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Ahmaud Aubrey and George Floyd, amongst so many others, have not only shone a light on anti-black violence, but have highlighted the persistent and insidious nature of structural racism, both in the US and in Canada. As a white woman of privilege, while I am aware that the sin of racism infects my own heart, I also acknowledge that I cannot fully understand the impact and effects of racism on my racialized brothers and sisters.

Lament is not simply the shedding of tears but is crying out to our Heavenly Father in pain. It is prayer, at the invitation of God, to cast our fears, frustrations, and pain on to God, hoping to renew our confidence that in Jesus Christ all things are being made new and the Spirit of God is being poured out on *all* flesh. As the Bishop of the most racially diverse part of the Diocese of Toronto, I join you in lament over the denial of the full humanity of all God's people, and will continue to work with you to ensure that all people can find hope and mercy in our churches and our neighbourhoods.

I can't breathe were the last words of George Floyd. *I can't breathe* are the words of many who have been suffocating under the weight of systemic racism and violence for centuries. Racism is smothering the beauty of God's rich and diverse creation, and racism will smother our ability to follow the God of

mission in York-Credit Valley. Racism sucks breath and life out of people, and yet having just celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, we know we can be comforted and rejoice with the prophet Job (33:4) that "The Spirit of God has made me, and the **breath** of the Almighty gives me life."

As the current Diversity Officer for the Diocese of Toronto, I am working closely with the Intercultural Committee to bring anti-racism and anti-bias training to our Diocese. Please join me as leaders in York-Credit Valley in taking this training when it becomes available, continue to cry out to God in prayerful lament, listen carefully to the stories of pain and fear within your congregation, donate to verifiable bail or memorial funds, appropriately leverage social media to amplify black voices, and proclaim together that we are siblings in Christ.

Peace,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "x Jennifer Andison".

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