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To: To Clergy and People of the Diocese

Date: May 13th, 2020

Dear Friends,

Perseverance

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Romans 5:1-5

Patience, perseverance, endurance are words which are familiar to Christians. In the bible they describe everything from the endurance of evil and wickedness, the anticipation of something to happen, the expectations fulfilled in Christ Jesus to a characteristic of God. In reference to the passage from Romans: “Patience in the midst of tribulation is one link in a chain which leads through to triumphant faith in the love of God... The patience of the saints is thus more than endurance of persecution or passive acquiescence in temporary evils. It is a lively outgoing power of faith, an active energy rather than a passive resignation.” (1)

8 weeks (or is it 80) into the Covid 19 restrictions, patience is being tested. Public health officials in both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are taking a cautious approach to lifting the restrictions. The tentative time lines for a return to more normal social exchange stretch into months and are dependent on how we adapt to the gradual lifting of restrictions and whether the spread of the virus can be constrained. Years ago someone told me that “Patience is a virtue not easily acquired” (maybe this is a quote from someone famous?). I am not a very patient person. Try as I might, I don’t like line-ups. I have never figured out how to “redeem” the time that I only see as wasted. Once a decision is made I am ready to move forward... but this is not the world we are living in right now. Rushing too quickly to unfettered social interaction risks making everything we have done for the past two months into wasted time while leaving us to face the ongoing impact of the virus on those most vulnerable.

Is it possible to go beyond passive resignation of these restrictions and the loss of so much of our communal life and instead value what this time is giving us? Is our endurance producing character and leading to hope? Restrictions in one form or another are going to be with us for a long time, what are the things we need to be thinking about when they are gradually relaxed?

Later this week I will be participating in a video meeting with leaders from other denominations and the Medical Officer of Health for Nova Scotia, to discuss ways the churches and other faith groups will be impacted by the gradual re-opening of our society. There will probably be a difference in the ways that restrictions will be lifted in the two provinces. We will be taking our direction from the Public Health Officers, but it is good to be invited into conversations as those directions are being shaped.

Though it may be a little speculative at this point, what kinds of decisions will your parish need to make as we look forward to a re-opening of our church buildings? And the possibility of being able to gather for worship?

It is likely that some non-essential businesses will be able to reopen by early June, including day care operations. If your parish rents space to a day care you need to make plans now for how they can begin to safely use your space.

+ As of this morning we have received the requested financial information from 59 of 94 parishes. This information is necessary for the diocese to apply for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. The threshold for eligibility is a demonstrated loss of revenue of at least 15% in March and 30% in April. The information received so far, shows that we meet the eligibility criteria for March. Our diocesan controller will proceed with the application this week. We still need the information from parish treasurers for April.

+ The list of nominees for the election of a new diocesan bishop will be released on Saturday of this week. The list will be posted on the diocesan website, emailed to Synod delegates, and placed on the diocesan Facebook page. Please continue to pray for the electoral process, for the nominees and their family.

“Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts: Grant thy blessing, we humbly beseech thee, to the clergy and laity about to assemble for the election of a Bishop; and give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that a chief Pastor may be chosen who shall minister before thee to the glory of thy Name, the good government of the flock committed to their charge, and the welfare of thy holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen. (2)

“Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.” Psalm 31:24

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read '+ Ron Cutler'.

The Most Reverend Ron Cutler
Archbishop of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island

(1) A Theological Word Book of the Bible, Alan Richardson (ed.), SCM Press Ltd., London, 1950, p.165

(2) The Book of Common Prayer, p. 44-45