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To: The Clergy and Parishes of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Date: March 16th, 2020

COVID 19 Update

Dear friends,

The situation is changing rapidly and updates from public health officials are now occurring on an almost daily basis. The following directions are based on the best information that we have as of this morning. Some may perceive them as being excessive, others as falling short; however I believe that they are consistent with what the wider community is being asked to do to limit the spread of COVID 19 and the mission entrusted to us. These measures are being taken out of abundance of caution and in the interests of the common good, particularly for those whose age or health makes them more vulnerable during this pandemic. Provisions in my earlier pastoral letter about health concerns continue to apply.

Worship: Effective today and until April 3rd, 2020, all public liturgical celebrations in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are suspended. This includes regular Sunday services, any midweek liturgies, children's and adult faith formation programs. Church buildings may be opened for individuals to offer private prayer. The earlier notice about increased building cleaning needs to be observed. A decision will be made on or before April 3 regarding Holy Week and Easter worship.

Funerals: If funerals or celebrations of life cannot be deferred to a later date, families should be encouraged to restrict attendance to family members only. Graveside liturgies are an option. There should be no "receptions" following the funerals which do take place. Funeral Homes may have their own protocols.

Weddings: Couples should be encouraged to delay weddings until after this community health risk has passed. If existing plans cannot be changed, the liturgy may take place as a small family gathering with proper social distancing and hygiene. There should be no wedding receptions in parish buildings.

The Synod Office will remain open. Today we are creating a dedicated section of the Diocesan Website for COVID-19 related information and announcements. We will endeavour to update this information on a daily basis. In the next few days we will provide resources and suggestions for how to stay in touch with parishioners, simple ways to livestream worship, outside worship with safe social distancing and pastoral responses.

Meetings: There will be no in-person meetings of diocesan teams or task groups during this period. Team leaders and task group chairs should contact the Synod Office to arrange for electronic meetings. MORE Mission Schools for March 21 (Eastern Shore) and 28 (Cape Breton) are being