ANGLICAN DIOCESE
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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February 5, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Today, February 5, 2021, the provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, extended the January 7 health order suspending in-person public worship, social and community events and gatherings—whether indoors or outdoors— indefinitely, as part of widespread measures being implemented across the province.

In response to this updated order, the diocese is extending the suspension of **all in-person worship, gatherings, events and meetings (indoors and outdoors) until at least April 12.** Ash Wednesday is not an exception to these restrictions. While the imposition of ashes is not available to us at this time, all of the spiritual practices of Lent—self-examination, penitence, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and meditating on Scripture—are available and should be encouraged.

All other restrictions on the use of our spaces will remain unchanged until further notice.

I know that it is deeply disappointing to once again be contemplating Easter apart from one another. We so long to be together in the Eucharistic feast. Instead, we are unwillingly united by our Eucharistic fast. It is an uncomfortable place to be. However, I feel that God is calling us to learn something about the importance of Eucharist and sacrament apophatically. I believe God is calling us, as the church, to spend this season being sacrament to one another by living out our baptismal promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbours as ourselves.

I am asking you to find creative and life-giving ways to walk through Lent and into the joyful resurrection of Christ Jesus, together. Consider collaborating with the other parishes in your region. Perhaps take turns hosting online Holy Week services or join together for a Lenten study series. And, in all of this, use what you have learned this past year to be a *renewed people, with renewed hearts and renewed spirits* so that you can be light to the world.

As has been the case since the beginning of the pandemic, diocesan leaders will continue to consult with provincial health authorities, and I will now join them. We will continue to relay to the province the challenges we face as people of faith—as sacramental people formed in communities gathered at table. At the same time, we will continue to show our steadfast support of every effort made to keep the most vulnerable—the least of these—among us, safe. We will continue to show the sacrificial love we are called to in Christ.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership throughout this time. I am grateful to be with you, in spirit, if not in body. Please reach out if there is anything we at the synod office can do to support you.

Blessings,

Anna
The Right Rev. Anna Greenwood-Lee
Bishop