

**Audio Transcript: A Message of Hope from the Primate
Archbishop Linda Nicholls
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www.anglican.ca/primate/a-message-of-hope-from-the-primate

Greetings to the Anglican Church of Canada. Although we know that life can be full of surprises, we usually plan our lives in the expectation of stability. We set dates for a longed for vacation trip, we plan a wedding, we look forward to going home for an anniversary or a significant birthday. I know my own calendar was filled with expected events, travel, and celebrations for months in advance until COVID-19 locked us down. At first, my calendar was empty and a bit scary, and then began to have tentative dates, or at least plans to prepare a videotaped message.

Yet, even now, seven months later, everything is put into the calendar with a question mark. Will it be in person? Or by Zoom? Or canceled? The stability and security of our daily lives is gone. We had hoped it would be resolved by Easter, then by the summer, then by Thanksgiving, and now Christmas looks doubtful, and we are tired of it all. The wearing masks everywhere you go, sanitizer in every pocket, purse, and in every location we visit or live, and no hugs or handshakes.

There is no end in sight as the second wave rolls through our communities and research continues to seek a vaccine. We long for stability, even as we long to gather together again. In every in-person socially distant small group I have attended, people comment on how good it is to see real flesh and blood three-dimensional people, even if they are masked.

Dr. Aisha Ahmad is a political science professor who has visited many disaster zones. She spoke on Twitter about her experience saying, "I always hit a wall six months into a tough assignment in a disaster zone. The desire to get away or make it stop is intense. I've done this many times and at six months, it's like clockwork." She also knows it will last four to six weeks, struggling to feel creative or hopeful and then will break through it. We are in that four to six week, six month wall. In this time she counsels, "Be gentle with yourself. Go for a walk outdoors. Take care of essentials for you and your family, and do not expect too much of yourself or others."

As people of faith, we do have one foundational certainty, a rock on which we can stand in the midst of the swirling uncertainties around us. That rock is Jesus Christ. The practice that helps us stay rooted on that rock is prayer. One of the joys of this pandemic time has been the use of the Daily Office. Daily morning and evening or night prayers. Grounding our days and the rhythm of scripture and prayers helps us to remember who we are each day, each night. It is a foundational part of being Anglican. It is expected of clergy and roots the life of religious communities and is offered to all Anglicans through our Book of Common Prayer, Book of Alternative Services and online shared resources around the Anglican Communion.

Many have delighted in morning or evening prayer with the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral in the garden or the piggery or around the cathedral, or with the cat. Others have joined one of our bishops including Bishop John Watton, Bishop Mary Irwin-Gibson, Archbishop Anne Germond, Bishop Lynne McNaughton, Bishop David Lehmann or others online through live opportunities. So keep praying!

The uncertainty of the months ahead is depressing. In-person worship has started for some but it's not the same as we observe all the careful and necessary rules to be socially distanced, masked, with no contact or singing or coffee hour! Yet we are God's people. We continue to be the church called to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves to the best of our ability within the circumstances of our situations.

I have been deeply encouraged by the faithfulness of so many during this time in preparing online worship daily and weekly. In reaching out to those in need. Continuing lunch and meal programs to feed the hungry. Caring for friends and neighbors through phone calls, prayer shawls, meals and reminders that they are not alone. Or in advocating for those forgotten in our social chaos.

We are approaching All Saints Day when we remember those who have gone before, and have lived their faith as a visible witness in their time. Many lived through even more challenging circumstances; wars, plagues, natural disasters, political oppression, religious persecution, economic collapse, and pandemics. And they have shown us a way. In living memory, we know people who were faithful through World War One, the Spanish Flu, the Great Depression, World War Two and other regional conflicts and disasters. Our grandparents and parents and great-grandparents were called to faithful perseverance, as are we. They continued to build and sustain church communities, love God and their neighbor, and we are here because of their witness. I am confident Anglicans across Canada will do no less.

So, let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, facing the challenge of our time in COVID-19. And as citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

Let us pray. Holy God, we give you thanks for the triumph of Christ in the lives of all your saints. Receive all we offer you; our mind, body, soul, and strength. And help us, like them, to run our course with faith. That we may come to your eternal kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our rock and our salvation. Amen.