



# *Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador*

## *The Anglican Church of Canada*

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December 6, 2019

### **An Advent Letter to the Church from Bishop Geoff**

My Dear People,

I write to you during this Season of Advent, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord at Christmas, to share with everyone a few recent developments in our diocese and to reflect upon our missional journey together. I continue to be inspired by some of the fresh and life-giving conversations happening across our church these days in the wake of our 2018 Synod on Christian Mission and in the wake of our 2019 Synod on Marriage Equality.

Our Mission Archdeacon, the Venerable Greg Mercer, and the Mission Deans and various Mission Teams continue their good work together since our 2018 Synod and I anticipate some significant decisions to be made in several of our parishes in 2020 that will enable our people to choose a different future that is hopeful and sustainable. I ask everyone to engage in a good way with the mission conversations underway right now and please encourage those taking leadership in our church at this time of change. I am also pleased to announce that since our Synod in September of this year dealing with marriage in our church, 15 parishes have requested and been given permission to offer same-sex marriage to those who request. Two such unions have been blessed in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador since October.

As we approach Christmas, I encourage everyone to help out with all of the planning and celebrations that Christmas brings. I note that there is an impressive array of worship services offered across our diocese during the Christmas season and also a great number of special ministries of outreach and care for those in need this year. Please contribute to those ministries to the best of your ability and do feel welcome to share in worship in your local church. As for me, I am planning a "Labrador Christmas" and will be spending Christmas on the coast of Labrador in Mary's Harbour and the surrounding communities. I very much look forward to sharing in worship, home communions and visitations with the good people in that part of our diocese as I continue to seek a permanent priest to work there. I thank the Reverend Gail Williams who lives in Cartwright for her oversight of that vast parish, along with Deacon Jennifer Rumbolt who lives in Mary's Harbour. Because I will be Labrador, some of my regular commitments for Christmas Eve and New Year's Day will be suspended and there will not be my usual New Year's Levee on January 1 at the Cathedral.

In January and February, I am taking some study leave to write and study and reflect and I will be returning to regular duties on March 1. During those two months, Archdeacon Sam Rose, as Episcopal Commissary, will be

overseeing our diocese in collaboration with our Senior Leadership Team and Diocesan Chancellor, Canon Brad Wicks.

I am very pleased to announce the appointment of the **Reverend Mark Nichols** to the position of **Creation Care Animator** for the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador effective January 1, 2020. Reverend Mark will assume this responsibility in the life of our church on a part-time basis. In this time of growing concern about climate change and other environmental matters it is vital that the Anglican Church encourage a sustained focus on the care of our common home. Mark brings an immense passion to this new position and is well-known for his writings in *Anglican Life*.

By way of background to the appointment, I remind everyone that the fifth of the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission is "**To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.**" Not only has the Anglican Church of Canada affirmed this mark of mission, in 2013 General Synod incorporated it as a ninth question of inquiry to the baptismal covenant in the Book of Alternative Services: "**Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth?**"

In his role as Creation Care Animator, Reverend Mark Nichols will work within our diocese to raise awareness of creation care as an integral aspect of our faith, and to build relationships between the diocese and environmental advocacy groups in the broader community. His responsibilities will include:

- The development of educational presentations on subjects such as: a theology of creation care; the climate crisis; plastics pollution; and tangible ways to address these issues
- Offering presentations and workshops to parishes on various aspects of creation care
- Identifying and/or developing creation care resources for parishes and individuals
- Networking with other environmental advocacy groups, and participating in their events
- Communicating on creation care issues within the diocese and the broader community

It is my sincere hope that Mark's new work will not only awaken a sense of awe and responsibility for creation among the Anglican community but also encourage us to become more intentional about environmental matters so that those fighting for the future of this fragile earth in the wider community will see the Anglican church as an ally. This, I firmly believe, is an inseparable aspect of the Church's mission as a people who profess faith in a God who created "all that is, seen and unseen."

With my every Advent blessing,  
+*Geoffrey*



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